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Volume XI Part 3

Book C

SMALL WARS AND BORDER PROBLEMS  
THE NOMONHAN INCIDENT.  
(CONCL.)

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

Part 1 of Volume XI in the series of Japanese Studies on Manchuria deals with border problems, clashes, and policies. Part 2 treats border garrisons and fortifications. Part 3 was divided into three books for production reasons: Book A deals exclusively with the Changkufeng Incident; Books B and C, with the Nomonhan Incident.

Prefatory data and acknowledgments pertaining to the Nomonhan Incident are presented in Book B.

5 November 1956

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Japanese Studies on Manchuria

Volume XI

Part 3

Book C

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CHAPTER 9  
NEW OFFENSIVES

Activation of Sixth Army

On 4 August 1939, IGHQ ordered the activation of Sixth Army Headquarters, under Lt. Gen. Rippei Ogisu.<sup>1</sup> The Chief of Staff of the new Army was to be Maj. Gen. Tetsukuma Fujimoto; the senior staff officer, Col. Sueo Hamada. On 12 August, the Commanding General and his key staff members reached Hailar from their various duty stations; next day they arrived at the locale of the Nomonhan battles. After inspecting the front-line situation, Gen. Ogisu transmitted the following message to Hsinking:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

FROM: CG, Sixth Army

1. Inspected battlefront this day (13 Aug). Officers and men are in excellent spirits.
2. Enemy has been launching minor sallies daily. In particular, artillery bombardment and aerial attacks against ground targets have been repeated.
3. Sixth Army plans to develop resiliency in its own future offensive, by avoiding local counterattacks, and by endeavoring to

---

1. The activation of the Sixth Army was effected in accordance with the annual revision of IGHQ's Army Expansion Guide. Previously, on 19 May 39, Fifth Army Headquarters had also been established in Manchuria. - Ed.

complete fortifications and winter-quarter facilities as early as possible.

### Soviet Counteroffensive

Previous discussion has indicated that the Intelligence Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters fully anticipated that an enemy offensive would be launched about the 14th or 15th of August, but nothing was known concerning the scope or strength of the assault. The Kwantung Army believed that the enemy offensive could be checked by strengthening fortifications, by replenishing combat effectiveness, and by reinforcing the front with heavy artillery units and elements of the 7th Division.

On 9-10 August, enemy forces attacked Japanese front-line positions on both sides of the Holsten River. Powerful units of infantry, artillery, and armor struck from the direction of the river confluence, but retreated when they ran into the Japanese positional defenses. Behind them, the Soviets left about 500 dead; friendly casualties totaled approximately 60. For the first time during the Nomonhan Incident, the Japanese realized the advantages of fighting from fixed positions, and sustained their defense with confidence. The enemy assault, however, was on too small a scale to be considered the all-out August offensive. It was believed that the attacks were merely feelers preceding the main offensive.

The Kwantung Army did not have very long to wait. On the morning of 21 August, the following report was received from the 23d Division:

TO: COFS, Kwantung Army

FROM: COFS, 23d Division

1. Since this morning (20 August), enemy activities suddenly intensified. Foe has launched an offensive along almost entire front.

2. Opposite units guarding sector north of Honjinganga, enemy completed deployment of about 1,000 infantry and cavalry, 50 tanks, and 10-odd artillery pieces, after which he commenced attack at 1200 hours. Main force afterwards approached Lake Garot (16 kms. west of Chiangchunmiao).

The company-size Manchukuoan Army cavalry unit on the extreme right flank of the Nomonhan front, at Honjinganga, was badly defeated and retreated eastward. The enemy appeared to be attempting an advance upon the Chiangchunmiao area from the outer flank of the Japanese positions. (See Map No. 22). At Kwantung Army Headquarters, on 21 August, another message was received, this time from the  
2  
Sixth Army Commander:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

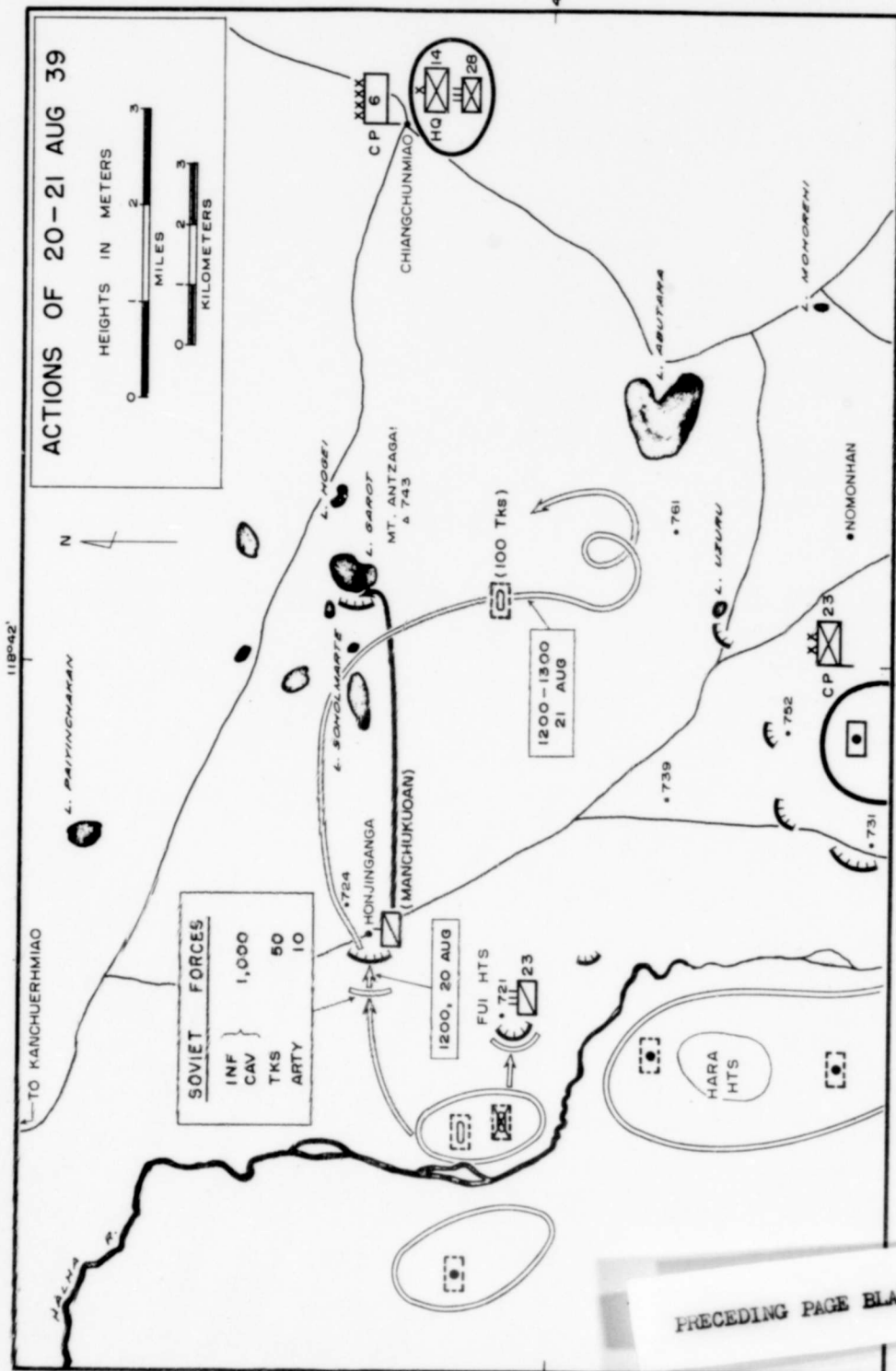
FROM: CG, Sixth Army

Judging from battle situation prevailing since 20 August, enemy's forward elements which have appeared on 23d Division front consist of at least two infantry divisions plus mechanized units. At present, main objective appears to be sector south of Holsten River.

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2. Affidavit of Lt. Gen. Rippei Ogisu, IMTFE, Transcript, 26 May 47, p. 23,031. - Ed.

# MAP NO. 22



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Gen. Ogisu, the Sixth Army Commander, has stated that he was at Hailar on 20 August when an aerial message was conveyed to him, to the effect that combined Outer Mongolian and Soviet forces, composed primarily of armor, had made inroads into Manchukuoan territory along seven separate roads. On 21 August, the Sixth Army Chief of Staff was sent to the front; Gen. Ogisu himself reached the battle zone on the 23d, and endeavored to check the enemy advance.

Going over the reports from the battle front, Kwantung Army Headquarters noted that the extreme right flank had been penetrated, while the primary target of the enemy's current offensive seemed to be the region south of the Holsten, on the Japanese left flank. All in all, it seemed to be the beginning of a general offensive. Counting only the forward units, the enemy seemed to have committed no less than two infantry divisions, but inclusion of his secondary strength would probably increase the total to three or four infantry divisions. The Intelligence Section had so far estimated enemy strength at a maximum of 2-3 infantry divisions and 2-3 tank brigades, but Army Headquarters believed that the foe had committed twice those numbers. Past experience suggested that at least 4-5 Soviet tank brigades were in action.

Prior to the commencement of the enemy offensive, intelligence reports indicated that the Soviets would have to use trucks across distances as great as 600 kilometers. Intercepted radio messages



showed that enemy front-line forces were apparently encountering extreme difficulties in securing supplies. From this information, Kwantung Army Headquarters concluded that there were certain obvious limits imposed upon the strength that the enemy could commit to battle at Nomonhan.

According to reports transmitted after 20 August by the Sixth Army and the 23d Division, the general impression of the enemy offensive was that it had occurred at the expected time and in the anticipated manner. Kwantung Army Headquarters' contemporary estimate may be summarized as follows:

1. The positions on the 23d Division front have already been reinforced and are fairly strong.
2. Although the Manchukuoan Army's Hsingan Division, located midway between Handagai and the main force of the 23d Division, has been destroyed by the enemy offensive, the Shihlan Detachment [Chingan Division, hq: Tsitsihar] has relieved the Hsingan Division and has already occupied its positions.
3. The Morita [14th] Brigade of the 7th Division (now being assembled in the vicinity of Chiangchunmiao) can be immediately committed to battle.
4. With the completion of the organization of the Sixth Army Headquarters, field command channels have become more efficient.

It was expected that the newly activated Sixth Army would be able to render highly satisfactory command over the present situation.

### Air Activities

Enemy aircraft were so extremely active on 20-21 August that it was doubtful if the Japanese Air Force still retained actual control of the skies over Nomonhan. It will be recalled that a Japanese air offensive against Soviet bases in Outer Mongolia had been authorized by Tokyo on 7 August. For two days after the Soviet offensive was launched on 20 August, the Kwantung Army managed to mount 160-plane raids against Madat and Tamsag, in the course of which about 100 Soviet aircraft were destroyed at a cost of 14. (See Chapter 8). Although the results were obviously excellent, it was apparent that the overtaxed Japanese airmen had suffered great fatigue. Some of the operations staff officers suggested several days' rest for the air units, lest mastery of the air over the Nomonhan battle zone be lost to the foe. The staff officers in charge of air operations insisted, however, that support must be provided for the ground forces and that the air force should not rest while decisive ground battles were being waged.

From 22 August, the enemy's aerial tactics differed from his preceding pattern. Small formations of Soviet aircraft now frequently rendered close ground support, taking advantage of the intervals between interception flights by Japanese fighters. Kwantung Army Headquarters judged that the Soviet Air Force was committing its entire Far Eastern combat strength in support of the decisive ground campaign.

Kwantung Army Command

When the clearly foreseen Soviet offensive was finally launched on 20 August, Kwantung Army Headquarters felt that it had done everything possible to cope with it. Nevertheless, on 23 August, the decision was made to move the 7th Division to Hailar, in anticipation of attacks by forces larger than previously expected. The summary of this decision was wired to the Deputy Chief of Staff, who was then at the battle front:

TO: DCOFS, Kwantung Army

FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

SUBJ: Kwantung Army Opns Order No. 134, Summary

1. 7th Division (less elements attached to Sixth Army), with river-crossing materiel, will concentrate at Hailar, and will be placed under Kwantung Army command.

2. Third and Fourth armies will each provide four antitank companies, which will be placed under command of 7th Division at Hailar.

3. 29th Infantry Battalion [organic to 3d Independent Garrison Unit at Tsitsihar] will be placed under command of Sixth Army, at Handagai.

4. 3d Signal Regiment Commander will control following units, under command of Sixth Army, at Hailar:

1st Prov Fld Sig Co  
1st thr 4th Prov Wireless Plats  
One mbl rep sec

Measures affecting the 7th Division and other units (Operations Order No. 134, above) were initiated prior to the receipt of any ad-

verse situation reports from Sixth Army Headquarters. At the time, in fact, Gen. Ogisu had dispatched the following message to Hsin-king:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

FROM: CG, Sixth Army

1. Without concentrating attack at any individual point, enemy intends to envelop us from our flanks, but his offensive effectiveness is weak. Enemy artillery fire diminished after reaching a climax on afternoon of 23 August [today]. Sixth Army has voluntarily withdrawn its left flank, in preparation for future [Japanese] offensive. Our positions in other areas are being strengthened.

Set your mind at ease.

2. Sixth Army will strike enemy tomorrow (24 August), as scheduled.

3. Enemy's harassing movements in our rear [west of Lake Abutara] are of no significance and pose no problem.

4. Although considerable damage has apparently been inflicted by enemy artillery fire, morale of our troops is very high.

5. I have been on battlefield since 20 August, directing combat.<sup>3</sup>

Gen. Ogisu's message indicates that the Japanese field forces apparently belittled the foe. Very shortly afterwards, however, the enemy unleashed a terrific offensive, which alarmed the Kwantung Army

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3. Cp. Gen. Ogisu's previous recollection that he himself did not reach the battle front until 23 August. - Ed.

Command. Gen. Ueda thereupon sent the Deputy Chief of Staff (Gen. Yano) and staff Maj. Tsuji to the front. On 24 August, the Commanding General, Sixth Army, was ordered to assume control of the 7th Division as soon as it arrived at Hailar.

### Sixth Army Counteroffensive

Sixth Army Headquarters, located south of Chiangchunmiao, worked out the following counteroffensive plan, in close co-operation with the 23d Division:

1. Positions in the right flank area will be secured by the Ioki Unit (23d Cavalry Regiment), the Yamagata Unit (64th Infantry Regiment), and the Sumi Unit (26th Infantry Regiment), as well as by elements of heavy and field artillery.

2. Key positions south of the Holsten River will be secured by the Morita Unit (71st Infantry Regiment), which will be reinforced by an element (the three-battalion Hasebe Unit) from the 8th Border Garrison Unit.

3. The Commanding General, 23d Division, will control the following units, and will, by offensive operations, destroy enemy forces moving toward our left flank area:

Right wing: 72d Inf Regt (CO, Col. Mikio Sakai), under Maj. Gen. Kobayashi

Left wing: Three bns, 7th Div, under Maj. Gen. Morita

Reserve: Yotsuya Bn (IGU)

Artillery: Five FA btries  
Two 15-cm. how btries  
Two 10-cm. gun btries

4. The counteroffensive will commence at dawn, 24 August.

On the night of 23 August, the 23d Division started to move up, reaching jump-off positions along the line of Hill 752 by next morning. (See Map No. 23). No time was found, however, to reconnoiter the enemy defenses. In the forward movement, the Division Commander was accompanied by the Chief of Staff of the Sixth Army (Maj. Gen. Fujimoto) and by a Kwantung Army liaison officer (Maj. Tsuji).

While the main body of the 23d Division was commencing its combat deployment, thick fog suddenly drifted over the battlefield, hindering the artillery; but the infantry pushed forward without encountering enemy fire. The fog lifted in about an hour, but by noon the forwardmost elements had bogged down immediately in front of the enemy's front line. Despite intensive Japanese artillery fire against the hostile positions, the enemy returned a far heavier barrage.

Near the Holsten River, enemy armor counterattacked the right flank of the advancing Japanese. At about 1400 hours, the Japanese right wing appeared to have stormed the enemy positions, but communication with these forces was thereafter cut off completely. When contact with the Morita (14th) Brigade, on the left flank, was also severed, the battle situation became precarious for the Japanese.

Several enemy tanks had meanwhile penetrated the front lines and driven toward the vicinity of Division Headquarters. One Japanese field artillery battery barely managed to repulse the Soviet

tanks, whereupon three formations of enemy aircraft (30 planes per wave) repeatedly raked Divisional Headquarters at low altitude, inflicting some losses.

At about 1600 hours, friendly bombers appeared, but attacked by mistake the train units of Division Headquarters. Great damage was caused to some dozen trucks, and a considerable number of personnel casualties were incurred.

Toward sunset, telephonic contact was made with Gen. Kobayashi's headquarters on the right flank, under extremely difficult conditions. The tragic news was now learned that the Japanese had assaulted the enemy positions at about noon but had been counterattacked by massive enemy armor, and had lost the brigade commander himself (Gen. Kobayashi, missing in action at the time), the regimental commander (Col. Sakai, wounded), and almost every battalion and company commander.

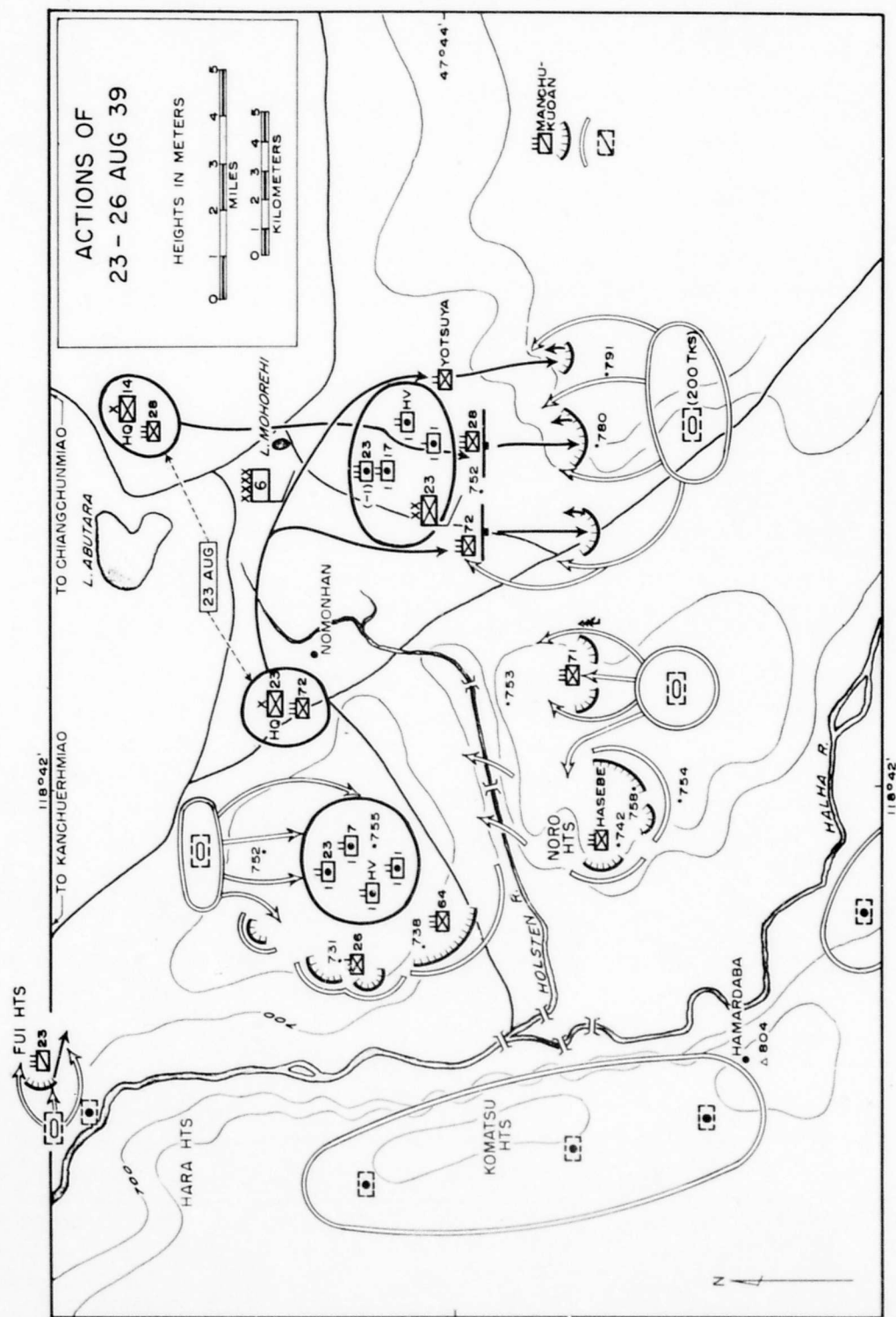
On the left flank, Gen. Morita now reported that although his forces were already deployed along the front, he had not been able to attack, because of heavy enemy artillery fire and a shortage of water supplies. The Morita force had therefore held up approximately 500 meters away from the enemy positions.

Upon receipt of these reports, Gen. Komatsubara evinced deep anxiety, while the Sixth Army Chief of Staff appeared bewildered.<sup>4</sup>

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4. When Maj. Gen. Kotoku Sato, the former commander of the 2d Sector Unit, 8th BGU, arrived from Hailar to replace the critically wounded Gen. Kobayashi, he was impressed by the "atmosphere of death" prevailing at 23d Division Headquarters. Sato Interview, Tokyo, 3 Jul 56. - Ed.

# MAP NO. 23





Shortly after sunset, a party of officers and men suddenly fell back from the direction of the right flank. The battle situation in that area was extremely unfavorable, and further Japanese attacks were utterly impossible. Army staff Maj. Tsuji therefore directed the withdrawal of the previously mentioned group and, by dawn on 25 August, had concentrated it around the site of Division Headquarters, where it became the divisional reserve.<sup>5</sup>

On 25 August, the Japanese offensive was resumed along the left flank (the Morita sector). The attack failed because of Gen. Morita's lack of aggressive fighting spirit, and because of the loss of combat effectiveness in his units (due to casualties).

It was decided, on 26 August, to suspend the offensive for the time being, while awaiting reinforcements from the 7th Division. Forward elements were accordingly withdrawn to the line of departure as of the morning of 24 August. (See Map No. 23).

Meanwhile, on the right flank, Fui Heights had been attacked by the enemy in superior strength since the evening of 23 August, and the key defenses had been destroyed. During the night of 24 August, Lt. Col. Ioki, the 23d Cavalry Regiment Commander, abandoned his positions without orders and pulled back to the east. Enemy forces thereupon enveloped the Japanese right flank in a broad sweeping

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5. The Yotsuya Battalion had presumably been already committed to battle, leaving no other infantry reserves available. - Ed.

maneuver, and gradually penetrated to the rear, in the vicinity of Chiangchunmiao. Japanese positions on the right side of the Holsten River were barely secured on 25 August, with the support of friendly artillery fire.

On the front of the Yamagata Unit (64th Infantry Regiment), the enemy thrusts were severe throughout 25 August, but the unit clung tenaciously to its positions. Hand-to-hand combat raged against frequent enemy penetrations.

#### Aftermath of Unsuccessful Offensive

The Sixth Army had launched its offensive with every expectation of ultimate success. Nevertheless, the attacks had failed to eliminate enemy forces on the southern bank of the Holsten River. In addition, the outer flank of the main Japanese defense lines along the northern shores of the Holsten had already collapsed, and the key points were in danger.

On 23 August, Kwantung Army Headquarters had already moved the 7th Division up to Hailar and assigned it to the Sixth Army. Since it was felt at the time that developments might not progress exactly as desired, Headquarters considered the dispatch of additional reinforcements. In view of the situation prevailing by the 25th of the month, certain Army staff officers suggested that two more infantry divisions (the 2d and the 4th) should be immediately sent to the front. These recommendations were not implemented, however,

for fear that the commitment of two divisions would effect a fundamental change in the over-all strategic concept for the defense of Manchukuo. Kwantung Army Headquarters therefore agreed upon a wait-and-see policy for the time being. Col. Terada, the Operations Section chief, dispatched the following wire to staff officer Tsuji at the front:

1. In view of general situation, it is deemed necessary to deal stunning blow to enemy forces occupying right bank of Halha River.

2. As you perhaps know, Sixth Army has already been reinforced by main strength of 7th Division plus eight antitank gun companies. At Hailar, 7th Division will arrive by evening of 25th; four AT companies, by evening of 26 August; remaining four AT companies by evening of 27th. Other units will reach front in succession.

3. It is hoped that you will notify us immediately of your opinion regarding necessity of sending reinforcements of divisional or other size, in addition to units mentioned in Para. 2, above.

Maj. Tsuji had already left for the front when Col. Terada's wire arrived. The Chief of Staff, Sixth Army, therefore handled the matter and wired the following reply, which was received at Kwantung Army Headquarters at 1850 hours on 25 August:

TO: Chief, 1st Sec, Kwantung Army

FROM: COFS, Sixth Army

1. I fully concur as to necessity of dealing stunning blow to enemy.

2. In view of combat effectiveness of our front-line forces vs. enemy strength, I believe that dispatch of another elite division as reinforcement (in addition to main strength of 7th Division) is necessary to expedite successful execution of offensive plan.

Also request that special consideration be given to additional supply of antitank weapons and ammunition.

3. Please notify us immediately whether requirement mentioned in Para. 2 above will be met, as it has great bearing upon present conduct of combat operations.

Maj. Tsuji returned to Hsinking on the evening of 26 August and reported to the Kwantung Army Commander and headquarters staff officers concerning the actual battlefield situation. The report indicated that the enemy's strength exceeded previous estimates by far. From his trip to the front, Maj. Tsuji brought back a map which had been taken from the corpse of an enemy officer. According to this map, the enemy's front-line strength appeared to total three infantry divisions, five tank brigades, and several groups of corps artillery. Second-line forces amounted to perhaps two infantry divisions and 1-2 tank brigades. Gen. Gun Hashimoto adds that, in the front-line fighting, the Soviets committed several hundred aircraft, a regiment of Army General Reserve artillery, several regiments of Army corps artillery, and two divisions of Outer Mongolian cavalry.<sup>6</sup> Gen. Ogisu later stated that the Russians used

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6. DMFE, Transcript, 20 May 47, p. 22,599. - Ed.

7

about 500 tanks on the right bank of the Halha.

The enemy was employing powerful medium armor, instead of the light tanks which had been destroyed by Molotov cocktails (earlier in the Incident). The new medium tanks were particularly characterized by effective high-velocity guns. All in all, the enemy was overwhelmingly superior, outnumbering the Japanese by more than 3:1. Enemy strength, in fact, was twice that of the estimates previously prepared by the Kwantung Army Intelligence Section.

Soviet Army data on the opposing strengths at Nomonhan in late August have recently become available. This information is presented in Table 22 and Maps No. 24 and 25.

### Crisis

In the face of the major Soviet offensive effort unleashed in August, Kwantung Army Headquarters decided to provide the Sixth Army with the 4th Division plus all antitank units and heavy artillery regiments in Manchuria. Shortly afterwards (on the night of 25 August), it was further decided to commit the 2d Division to battle. Strongly determined to destroy the enemy at any cost, the Kwantung Army had decided to throw all of its artillery and strategic reserves into the operation.

The situation was viewed with no less alarm in Tokyo, where the

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7. Ibid., 27 May 47, p. 23,082. - Ed.

Soviet Army Data on Opposing Forces,  
Komonhan, about 20 Aug 39\*

Belligerent	Inf Bns	Cav Sqs	HMGs & LMGs	Guns, 75-mm. & above	Guns, AT & Hn Type	Mortars	Tks	Armd Cars	Acft			
									Ftr	Lt Bmbr	Hv Bmbr	Tot
Soviets- Outer Mongolians	35	20	2,255	216	286	40	498	346	376	181	23	580
Japanese	25	17	1,283	135	142	60	120	Unkn	252	144	54	** 450

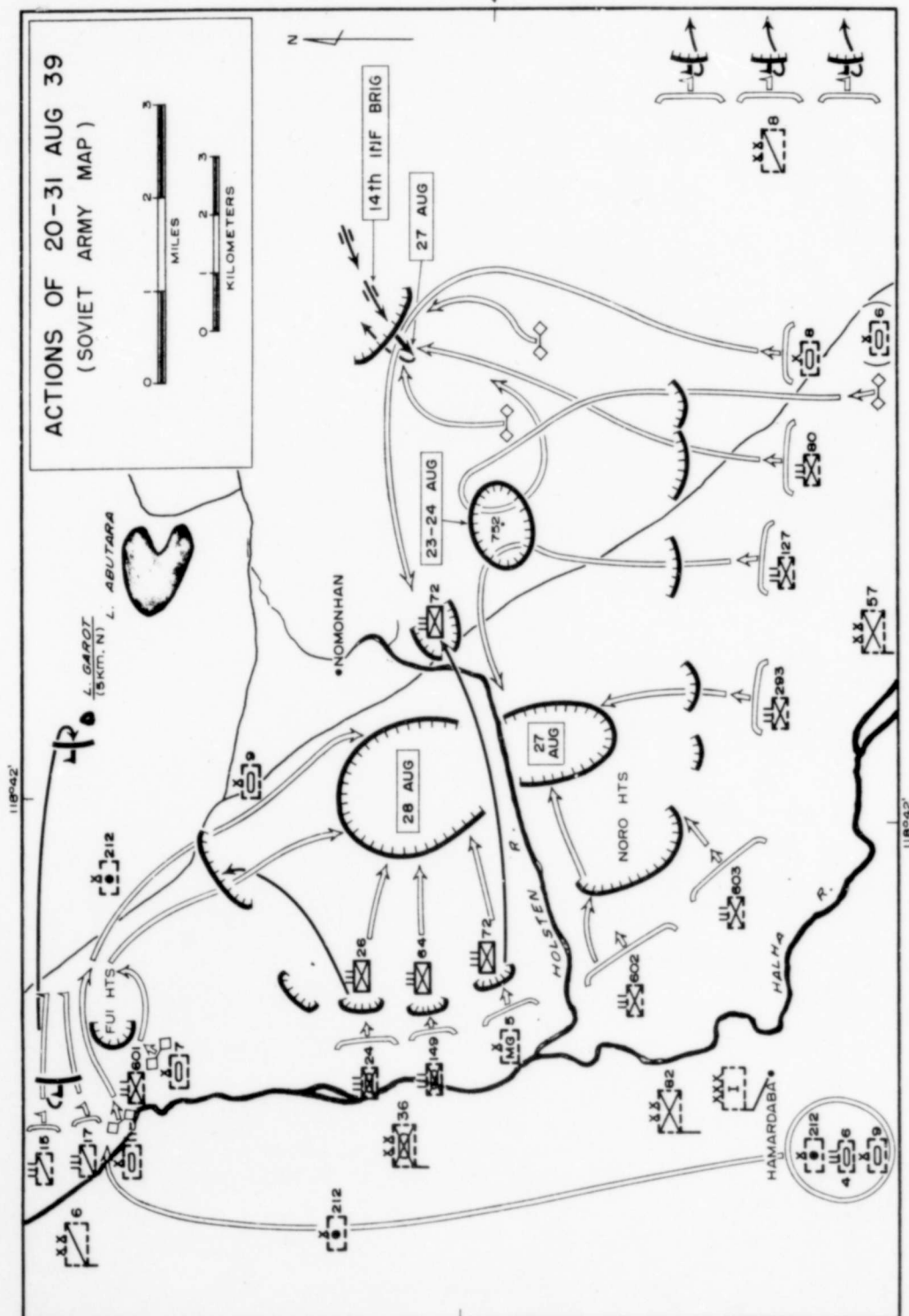
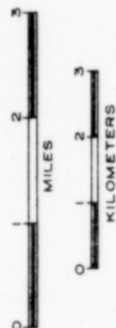
\* Col. S. N. Shishkin, op. cit., Table 3, p. 37. - Ed.

\*\* Cp. Table 20, above.

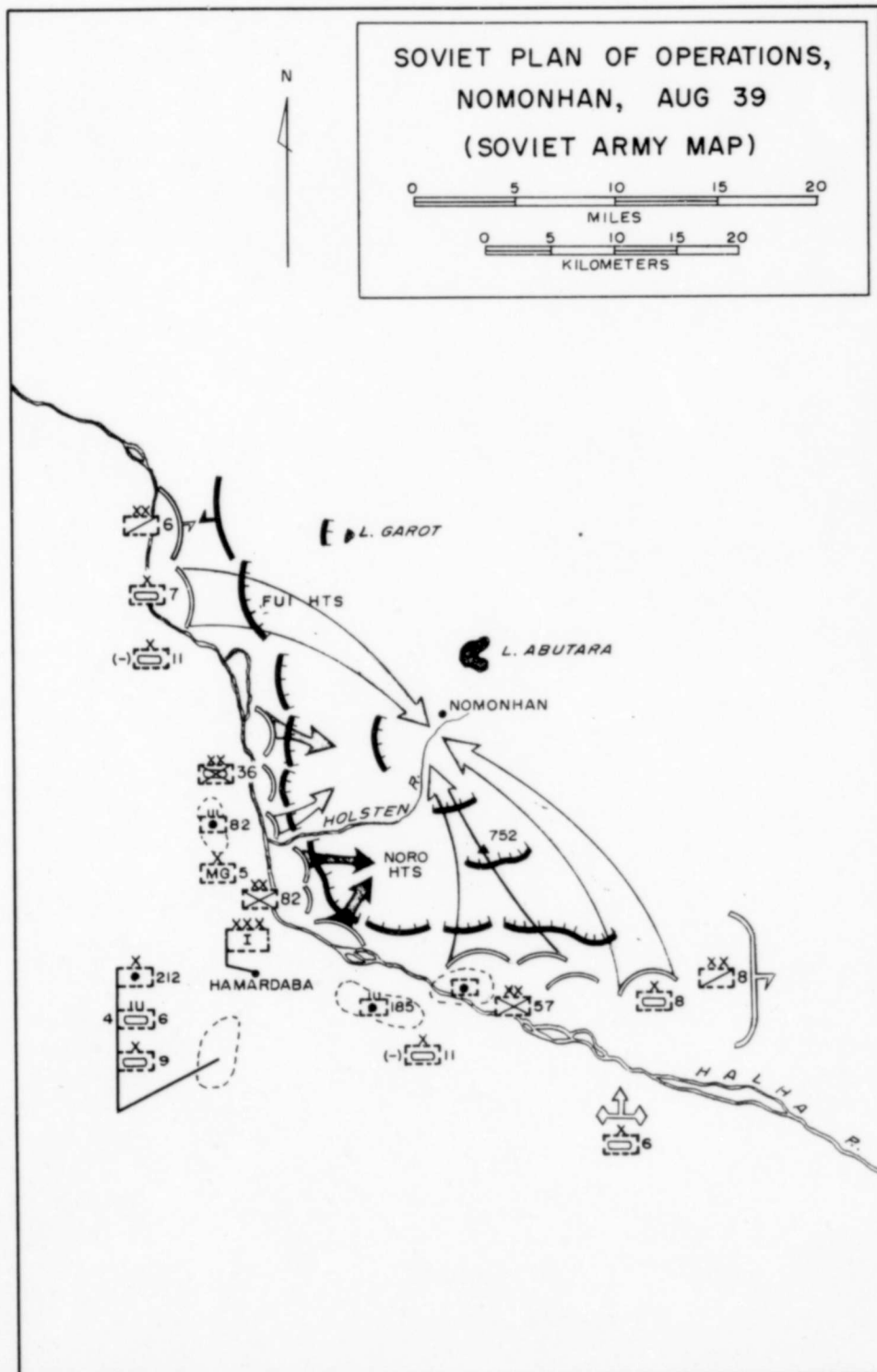
Table 22

# MAP NO. 24

## ACTIONS OF 20-31 AUG 39 (SOVIET ARMY MAP)



# MAP NO. 25





High Command realized that the enemy's Nomonhan offensive posed a crisis for all Manchuria. On 25 August, action was taken to transfer the 5th Division from the China theater to Manchuria. Kwantung Army Headquarters was also wired the following inquiry:

We are considering dispatch of reinforcements in view of situation in Nomonhan area. Request that you notify us of your future operational plans and of present status of 7th Division.

On 29 August, the High Command dispatched another message to Hsinking, stating that the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff was being sent to the front; and that two divisions and two 15-cm. howitzer regiments would be transferred from China and from the  
8  
homeland.

The Army High Command also decided to conduct a conference on 1 September at Fukuoka, between senior staff officers from Tokyo and Hsinking. The purpose of the parley was to make the necessary arrangements for dispatching reinforcements to the Kwantung Army. On the evening of 29 August, Lt. Col. Hattori left Hsinking to attend the Fukuoka conference with the High Command representatives.

#### Death Struggle of 23d Division

On 26 August, the Sixth Army Commander called off offensive operations south of the Holsten River, and proceeded to secure the

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8. One division and one howitzer regiment were stationed in the homeland, under direct IGHQ control. - Ed.

previous defenses. After the 7th Division arrived, he intended to restore the deteriorated situation. Forces were also redeployed, whereby the 23d Division Commander was to assume direct control of the troop remnants, fall back to the old positions north of the Holsten, and direct the actions of the Yamagata and Sumi regiments as well as of the main body of the artillery units. The Yamagata (64th) Infantry Regiment, however, had been unable to withstand the powerful enemy assaults, and was finally forced to abandon its positions during the night of 28 August. That same night, in the midst of chaotic combat, the 23d Division Commander, accompanied by 500 survivors, reached the former site of the Division CP and took over personal direction of the fighting.

During the night of 29 August, enemy tanks struck from the direction of Fui Heights, penetrated deeply into the Japanese right flank positions, and finally overran most of the heavy artillery batteries. Col. Takatsukasa, commanding the 7th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment, retreated, leaving his artillery pieces behind. The 64th Infantry Regiment also appeared to be nearing collapse.

For two days and nights, Japanese troops had been fighting desperately, ever since Gen. Komatsubara and his 500 survivors had personally plunged into the fray on the night of 28 August. Officers of all ranks were falling on every side, and entire units were destroyed to the last man. North of the Holsten River, the Provisional Heavy Artillery Battalion (less one battery) was annihilated on

26 August; the 1st Battalion, 1st Heavy Field Artillery Regiment on the 27th; and the 7th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment (less 1st Battalion) on the 28th.<sup>9</sup>

On 30 August, the 23d Division Chief of Staff, Col. Okamoto, had his legs shattered by a grenade blast. Medical instruments had been largely destroyed by bombardment, and a young medical probationary officer amputated Col. Okamoto's legs with a saber, using no anesthetic. By this time, every Division staff officer was out of action, except for the Commanding General and his intelligence officer, Maj. Suzuki. (Details on casualties are presented in following section). Scenes of tragic bravery marked the desperate combat, accompanied by gruesome and wretched sights.

Gen. Komatsubara decided to share the fate of his Division, by dying in battle. He entrusted his last will and testament to his aide, who managed to get through to Sixth Army Headquarters. The General and Maj. Suzuki stripped off and buried their epaulettes and insignia, concealed the identity of the CP, burned the code books, and prepared to commit suicide.

When the Sixth Army Commander learned of the 23d Division Commander's decision, he determined to save Gen. Komatsubara from the encircling enemy, and issued an order for him to break through the foe at any cost and fall back to the Chiangchunmiao area (30 August).

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9. Hata letter, 30 Aug 56. - Ed.

The instructions were carried back by the aide who had reached Sixth Army Headquarters and now returned to the Division CP. The same order was also wired in the clear, since the code books had been destroyed.

Shortly before midnight on 30 August, the Soviet tanks withdrew, perhaps to refuel. Gen. Komatsubara and the approximately 400 survivors of his command seized the opportunity to break through the encirclement, bearing their wounded with them, and guiding their course by the stars. By the morning of 31 August the remnants of the 23d Division reached the vicinity of Chiangchunmiao.<sup>10</sup>

#### Deaths and Suicides

The command structure of the battered 23d Division was torn apart by deaths in combat or by suicide. Mention has already been made of the annihilation of the Azuma Detachment (including Lt. Col. Yaozo Azuma, Commander of the 23d Cavalry Regiment) on 28 May; and of the death of the Division Chief of Staff, Col. Atsushi Ouchi during an air raid on 4 July. Now, as a result of the desperate fighting in August, many more key Japanese commanders were lost. According to Col. Shinichiro Sumi, who commanded the 26th Infantry Regiment, the problem was further aggravated by the fact that the

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10. Supplementary data provided by then-Maj. Yoshiyasu Suzuki, Staff Intelligence Officer, 23d Division; letter dated 24 Aug 56, Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture. - Ed.

Kwantung Army authorities viewed the outcome of the battles at Nonhan with dismay.  
11

Saying that the defeat was not due to the operational plan, but to the inadequate command of front-line commanders, they decided to punish us, but without formal procedures.

The following account describes the fate of various officers who fought under 23d Division command.

Col. Mikio Sakai, CO, 72d Inf Regt: Severely wounded, 24 Aug, during enemy tank attack. Hospitalized at Hailar, secretly left bed, committed suicide with a pistol.

This suicide was probably caused by the Army authorities' reprimand for the loss of the regimental colors, and for withdrawal from the front line or for neglect of his duties as a regimental commander 'only because of an arm wound.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Maj. Gen. Koichi Kobayashi, CG, 23d Inf Gp: Severely wounded, 24 Aug; one leg blown off during enemy tank attack.

\* \* \* \* \*

Col. Toru Morita, third CO, 71st Inf Regt: Killed in action, 26 Aug.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maj. Umeda, Act CO, 1st Hv FA Regt: Killed in action, 27 Aug.

\* \* \* \* \*

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11. Supplementary data based upon Sumi article, loc. cit., 7 Aug 55, pp. 12-19. - Ed.

Col. Takemitsu Yamagata, CO, 64th Inf Regt: Committed suicide during action, 28 Aug, after burning regimental colors. According to the previously cited version by Col. Sumi, however:

Col. Yamagata was presumed to have been killed while retreating, since his corpse was found to the rear of his designated position. Had it not been for a direct order from the War Ministry, he would not have been posthumously promoted to the rank of Major General.

\* \* \* \* \*

Col. Takahide Ise, CO, 23d FA Regt: Killed in action, 29 Aug. (Col. Sumi states that, "surrounded by the Soviets, Col. Ise committed suicide.")

\* \* \* \* \*

Col. Tokuzo Okamoto, COFS, 23d Div (successor to Col. Ouchi): Severely wounded, 30 Aug; legs shattered by grenade, and amputated on the spot. Col. Okamoto was evacuated to Hailar and thence to the 1st Tokyo Army Hospital, where he was slashed to death by a  
12  
crazed fellow-officer patient.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lt. Col. Muneharu Higashi, Act CO, 71st Inf Regt: Killed in action, 30 Aug.

\* \* \* \* \*

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12. Suzuki letter, 24 Aug 56. - Ed.

Lt. Col. Eiichi Ioki, CO, 23d Cav Regt: Committed suicide, night before scheduled court-martial (September?).

Lt. Col. Ioki's regiment, consisting of less than 400 men, had been deployed on Fui Heights, and was the first Japanese unit to be exposed to flame-throwing Soviet tanks. His unit could offer no resistance. When attacked by the Russian tanks, no one could have expected to survive, and I [Col. Sumi] believe that Ioki preferred withdrawal to annihilation of his men. The Army authorities, however, concluded that the loss of Fui Heights caused the collapse of our front; Ioki was just unlucky, however.

When he was ordered to commit suicide at Chiangchunmiao, he instantly refused. Then the Division's chief medical officer came to see him and, using a truly strange line of reasoning, tried to force him to commit suicide: 'You were wounded in the leg, and your chronic diabetes is far advanced, so your death is only a matter of time.' Ioki finally appears to have given up all hope, and committed suicide with a pistol.

\* \* \* \* \*

Col. Hasebe, CO, Inf Regt, 8th BGU: According to Col. Sumi, this officer was ordered to commit suicide for retreating, and shot himself with a pistol, in a trench (date unknown).

## CHAPTER 10

### FINAL STAGES OF INCIDENT

#### New Offensive Plans

The combat effectiveness of the 23d Division had been exhausted in the course of the August offensive. In order to prepare for further operations, Sixth Army Headquarters had to redeploy and reorganize both its existing and reinforced strength. The bulk of the 7th Division arrived to reinforce the front, and secured key offensive positions extending on both sides of the Holsten River, centering around Lake Mohorehi. Elements of the Manchukuoan Army covered the flanks by securing the Amukulang-Nomotschirin sector and Hill 97 (in the Handagai area). To the rear, shielded by the front-line forces, the 2d and the 4th Divisions massed north and east of Chiangchunmiao, respectively; while the 23d Division assembled between the two new divisions.

The 2d Division organized a detachment consisting of one infantry regiment and one artillery battalion, under Brigade Commander Katayama. Advancing along the Paichengtzu-Arshaan Railroad, the Katayama Detachment proceeded to reinforce the garrisons in the Handagai region. About 4 September, these elements reached Hill 97, where they replaced the Shihlan Detachment of the Manchukuoan Army. Meanwhile, the 1st Division had put together a force comparable to the Katayama Detachment, placing one infantry regiment and



an artillery battalion under Brigade Commander Goto. The Goto Detachment occupied the Handagai area, thus reinforcing the left rear flank.

By 9 September, the concentration of Japanese forces was generally completed; the combat effectiveness of the Sixth Army was now trebled. Preparations were steadily and confidently made, with a view toward destroying Soviet forces on the right bank of the Halha River, through a new offensive. (See Map No. 26).

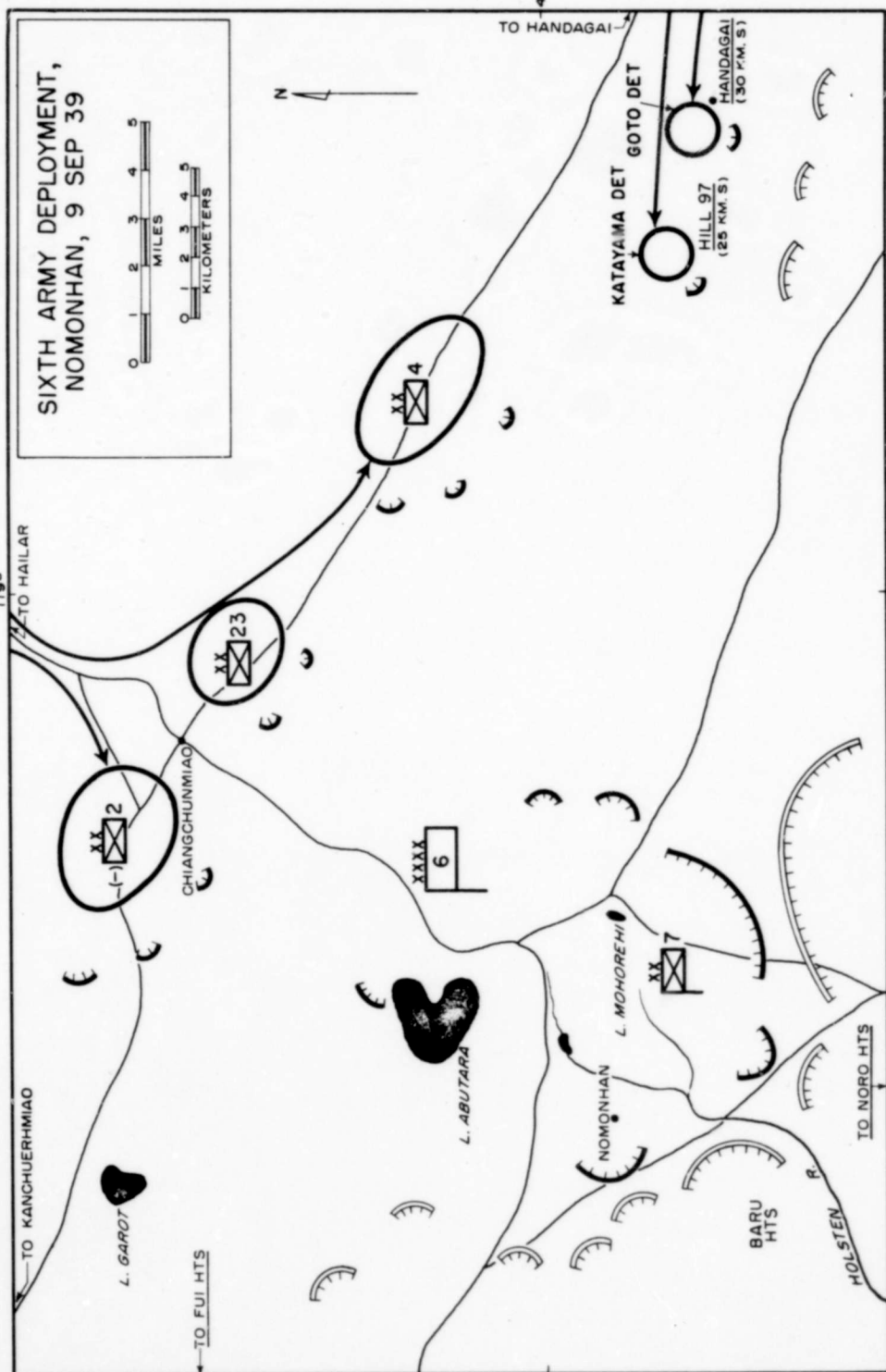
The mood prevailing at Sixth Army Headquarters is exemplified by the following exhortation issued by Gen. Ogisu early in September:<sup>1</sup>

Although the order to reform the Sixth Army was issued before, I must now state with sorrow that the realization of the glorious task of defense of the northwest area failed because the order was not carried out. The Army was cast into a whirlpool of disorderly fighting on the frontier between Manchuria

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1. Verbatim text from Prosecution Doc. No. 2231, Exhibit No. 766, p. 6, "Proclamation of the Commanding General of the Sixth Army," 5 Sep 39; IMTFE, Transcript, 16 Oct 46, pp. 7,858-60; and ibid., 26 May 47, pp. 23,039-40. Allegedly captured by the Soviet Army at Nomonhan, this Kunji (Instruction) was embodied in a memorandum prepared by the Military History Department of the Red Army General Staff for submission to the IMTFE. Under direct examination by the Russians, Gen. Ogisu denied the date and authenticity of the alleged proclamation. Ibid., 26 May 47, pp. 23,038-40. Then-Col. Sueo Hamada, Sr Staff Officer, Hq Sixth Army, likewise has no recollection of the issuance of such an instruction from the Army CP near Lake Mohorehi. Editorial interview, 31 Aug 56. - Ed.

# MAP NO. 26



and Mongolia. Such control of actions on the front continued for more than ten days into the present. Due to the brave and resolute actions of all the units under Lt. Gen. Komatsubara, chaos in the course of battles was diminished. Now the Army is preparing in the Dzindzin Sume [Chiangchunmiao] area for a new offensive.

The Commanding General of the Kwantung Army decided this autumn to help us by sending the well-trained troops stationed in Manchuria. He transfers them to the place of the future battle, places them under my command and plans urgent measures to be taken to settle the conflict. The circumstances are now such that it is clear that the matter went beyond the limits of a simple border incident. We are now waging a sacred war in China and any changes in the conflict under the circumstances of the complicated inner and outer [domestic and foreign?] situation acquire great state importance. The Army has only one way to carry out its actions, that is, to make the army unanimous and consolidated, and immediately strike a crushing blow at the enemy to annihilate its growing insolence.

At present the preparation of the Army is being successfully carried on. The Army will meet the coming autumn by finishing with one blow this mouse-stirring and will proudly show to the world the might of the selected Imperial troops. The officers and soldiers have a deep understanding of the present circumstances. All men of the Army from privates to high level are full of brave and decisive spirit and are sure of victory. The Army is always ready to crush and destroy the enemy anywhere, having a deep faith in its first Marshal, the Emperor.

### Suspension of Operations

On the evening of 30 August, the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff, Lt. Gen. Nakajima, first arrived at Kwantung Army Headquarters, where he presented the following order from Imperial General Headquarters:

IGHQ Army Order No. 343

30 Aug 39

1. The objective of IGHQ is to prepare against a possible invasion of Manchukuoan territory by the Soviet Union, and to maintain tranquillity on the northern frontiers with elements of the Imperial Army, while the China Incident is being resolved.

To attain this end, measures will be taken to terminate operations promptly in the Nomonhan area, while taking every possible precaution to prevent expansion thereof.

2. The Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will formulate plans for resisting with minimum strength in the Nomonhan area.

3. The Chief of the Army General Staff will issue detailed directives.

Gen. Ueda received IGHQ Army Order 343 from Gen. Nakajima, in the presence of the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Isogai. Kwantung Army staff officers then briefed Gen. Nakajima concerning the general situation and future plans. Present at this session, in addition to the previously mentioned three general officers, were Lt. Col. Kozuki (Operations Section, Army General Staff) and the following Kwantung Army officers: Gen. Yano (Deputy Chief of

Staff); Col. Terada (Chief, 1st Section, Operations); Lt. Col. Kato (Acting Chief, 2d Section, Intelligence); Col. Isoya (Chief, 3d Section, Logistics).

Col. Kato first presented an estimate of the enemy situation, after which Col. Terada explained the over-all picture as well as current and projected operations. Col. Isoya then reported on logistic matters.

At the time, Kwantung Army Headquarters had received no information concerning the Sixth Army's offensive plans, inasmuch as the latter headquarters had not yet drafted the details. Nevertheless, the Kwantung Army considered it unwise to operate across the Halha River, since the intention of the projected offensive called for promptly withdrawing the entire striking force after the enemy had been dealt a smashing blow in the briefest time.

After the explanations, Col. Kozuki asked Col. Terada whether it would be possible to carry out the offensive without the support of the 4th Division, to which Terada replied:

Support by the 4th Division is absolutely necessary. Not only that, but it is advisable to mobilize far larger forces for the attack, if possible. Furthermore, we are even desirous of obtaining the assistance of the 5th Division, which is to be sent as a reinforcement by IGHQ. Even if the arrival of this division should be delayed, we deem it necessary that the unit advance promptly toward the Arshaan area. The reasons why we are contemplating employment of such large forces in the projected offensive derive from the importance

of dealing a crushing blow to the enemy, by concentrating and manifesting maximum power in minimum time, whereupon the troops will be pulled back promptly. It is absolutely imperative not to be compelled to resort to piecemeal employment of forces.

Gen. Nakajima voiced no opinion, and the briefing came to a close. The Kwantung Army participants felt that their plans had been approved, but Gen. Ueda later felt the need to obtain clarification of Para. 2 in IGHQ Army Order No. 343 ("The CG, Kwantung Army, will formulate plans for resisting with minimum strength in the Nomonhan area.") Did this stipulation accord with the Kwantung Army's projected attack plans? The Army Commander told his Chief of Staff to find out from Gen. Nakajima.

Generals Isogai and Yano, together with Col. Terada, accordingly discussed matters with Gen. Nakajima and Col. Kozuki, in the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff's office. Gen. Isogai sought clarification of Para. 2, IGHQ Army Order No. 343, to which Gen. Nakajima replied:

The clause 'formulate plans for resisting with minimum strength' means strategic resistance. We, of course, have no objection whatsoever to the mounting of a tactical offensive, within that context.

Gen. Isogai then asked whether Gen. Nakajima had "any objection to the attack plan now being formulated by the Kwantung Army, which contemplates employment of the 4th Division." The reply was a categorical "No." Thus the Kwantung Army was able to confirm the

fact that the Commanding General's assigned mission was entirely in accord with the projected offensive operation. Gen. Nakajima, in fact, added:

Since the Army plans to launch an attack with such large forces, it is imperative that offensive operations be staged across the Hal-ha River.

Kwantung Army Headquarters personnel felt that Gen. Nakajima and Col. Kozuki, who had been sent to convey IGHQ Army Order No. 343, both comprehended the actual situation confronting the forces in Manchuria. The entire Army staff, from Gen. Ueda down, were greatly encouraged, and pledged themselves to plunge into the imminent offensive with a firm conviction of ultimate victory.

In the days that followed the departure for Tokyo of the IGHQ representatives on the morning of 31 August, a full set in along the battlefield at Nomonhan. Sixth Army Headquarters continued to prepare vigorously for the forthcoming offensive, and front-line units underwent training for a victorious assault upon the foe. In order to boost the morale of all Kwantung Army officers and men even further, Gen. Ueda issued the following instructions on 2 September:

## Instructions

2 Sep 39

The forthcoming engagement is entirely different in nature from past border conflicts. The outcome of this battle has a vital bearing on the destiny of the nation; it is no exaggeration to say that it will be the major decisive battle between Japan and the Soviet Union.

At a time when great changes are taking place both at home and abroad, all officers and men are hereby exhorted to uphold the cause of selfless devotion to their country; to fortify their faith in certain victory; to surmount all obstacles; to fight gallantly and nobly; and to destroy the barbarous and overbearing Soviet and Mongolian forces, thereby enhancing the prestige of the Imperial Army at home and abroad.

By Order of CG, Kwantung Army  
Gen. Kenkichi Ueda

On the same day that the Kwantung Army Commander issued the preceding instructions (2 September), Gen. Ogisu summoned his division commanders to the Sixth Army CP for preliminary staff conferences concerning future operational plans. When the assembled officers received Gen. Ueda's exhortation, their morale and fighting spirit soared "sky-high."

Meanwhile, Kwantung Army Headquarters had been somewhat pervaded by an atmosphere of gloom and depression because of the tremendous casualties incurred by the front-line units. Then, on 2 September, Maj. Tsuji returned from the battle zone, bearing



tidings of the Sixth Army's attack plan and of the high troop morale. This report proved encouraging to the Kwantung Army staff, who also believed that World War II was inevitable, in view of the extremely tense situation in Europe. All in all, it was anticipated that the situation confronting crisis-ridden Japan would now improve considerably--a source for great hope. In the midst of this increasingly optimistic mood, Kwantung Army Headquarters was shocked to receive the following Imperial Command on 3 September; it came like a bolt from the blue:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

FROM: COFS, AGS

IGHQ Army Order No. 349 is hereby proclaimed.

#### Summary

1. In view of prevailing situation, IGHQ will hereafter plan to bring border incident in Nomonhan area to voluntary settlement.

2. Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will suspend offensive operations in Nomonhan area. In order to prevent occurrence of skirmishes, troops will be redeployed outside disputed area, on right bank sector of Halha, except for region east of Handagai and environs.

IGHQ Army Order No. 336 will apply to air operations in case of emergency.

Notification will be made at later date, concerning time for withdrawal of main operational forces to former stations.

Another radio message stated that the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff, Gen. Nakajima, was returning by plane to Hsinking on 4 September. Confronted suddenly by an entirely unexpected change in situation, Kwantung Army Headquarters studied appropriate measures, and reached the following conclusions:

Decision

In order to suspend operations, in accordance with the Imperial Command, it is necessary that the Army first clear the battlefield on the right bank of the Halha River, recover all of the slain, and collect weapons left behind by the 23d Division.

Regarding methods for clearing the battlefield, it was decided to implement the preceding decision and to investigate other plans as well. In accordance with the conclusions reached, the Army Commander sanctioned Operations Order No. 178 on the afternoon of 4 September (although the order was not formally issued until the 6th):

Kwantung Army Operations Order No. 178

1. In order to suspend operations in Nomonhan area, in accordance with Imperial Command, Army will first clear battlefield.

2. CG, Sixth Army, will shift forces generally to pre-assembly positions at opportune time, and will keep watch upon enemy after clearing battlefield on right bank of Halha River.

Separate orders will be issued regarding subsequent movements.

3. Air Force will co-operate closely with Sixth Army.<sup>2</sup>

By Command of Gen. Ueda,  
CG, Kwantung Army

Underlying the Kwantung Army's decision to clear the battlefield were the following factors:

1. Since obedience to the Imperial Will must be absolute, the projected offensive had to be cancelled.

2. It was a time-honored tradition within the Kwantung Army that front-line units were to carry out their missions with utmost resolve; but once they encountered difficulties, higher headquarters would assume full responsibility for handling the situation. This policy made for a spirit of complete unity among all the officers and men, and was clearly expressed in Para. 6 of the Principles for Settlement of Soviet-Manchurian Border Disputes issued in April 1939.<sup>3</sup> Willfully to neglect the clearing of a battlefield where the 23d Division had fought so desperately was something which the Kwantung Army, in all conscience, could not tolerate; and which

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2. On 2 Sep 39, the new Kwantung Army Air Force Hq was established at Hsinking, incorporating the staffs of the old 2d Air Group Hq and the newly transferred Air Force Hq (from North China). Lt. Gen. Giga retained command of the new Hq. On 4 Sep 39, the Kwantung Army Air Force struck at enemy air bases in Outer Mongolia, destroying 22 planes at a cost of three. - Ed.

3. Kwantung Army Operations Section Order No. 1488 is reproduced in Appendix A, Part 1 of the present volume. - Ed.

would also lead to the destruction of authority [prestige] within that Army.

3. Careful study of the meaning of the clause concerning the "suspension of offensive operations," mentioned in the Imperial Command, led the Army to conclude that the order stipulated only the suspension of such large-scale offensives as the one which was hitherto being prepared. The clause probably was not meant to suspend even the recovery of corpses and the collection of weapons left behind in battle.

4. Existing enemy positions near Nomonhan possessed many gaps. If the Army made thorough preparations, and waged combat operations on several nights, using the 2d, 4th, and 7th Divisions, it could undoubtedly clear the site of the 23d Division's battles.

Elements of the 23d Division which could still be assembled (approximately 3,000 men [from original T/O of 13,000 plus replacements]) were to be entrusted with the direct task of recovering the divisional dead and of collecting weapons.

5. In order to maintain the authority [prestige] of the Kwantung Army, there was no alternative but to execute the previously mentioned decision, out of deference to the Imperial Command.

### IGHQ Liaison Mission

At about 0630 hours on 4 September, the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff, Lt. Gen. Nakajima (representing Prince Kanin) and Lt. Col. Kozuki reached Hsinking. They proceeded to Gen. Ueda's office, where Gen. Nakajima delivered IGHQ Army Order No. 349, which the Army Commander respectfully received. Then Gen. Nakajima conveyed the following oral message from the Chief of Staff:

In view of IGHQ Army Order No. 349, I earnestly trust that you will exercise patience and will prudently wait until later for revenge, using discretion in handling the situation by keeping the officers and men well under control. Because of the acute situation in Europe, we are scheduled to conduct diplomatic negotiations for an over-all readjustment of relations between Japan and the Soviet Union, particularly in regard to border security. Nevertheless, it is our policy not to conduct cease-fire negotiations as such.

Gen. Ueda then explained the Kwantung Army's plans to the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff, stating that he would suspend offensive operations in accordance with the Imperial Command, but that he would like to conduct battlefield salvage operations at the site of the 23d Division's combat. Gen. Nakajima did not concur, declaring that "disapproval of the plan was the purport of the Imperial Command." The Kwantung Army Commander then replied:

Regarding the execution of this plan, I personally shall proceed to the battlefield and direct operations to ensure that the fighting will not develop into a war of attrition. I request your permission to conduct battlefield clearance, even on the smallest of scales.

Once again the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff would not agree; he insisted that Gen. Ueda's proposal ran counter to the intent of the Imperial Will. The two general officers parted for a while, then met again. Said Gen. Ueda:

I deem it a great honor to have received the Imperial Command. I am personally responsible for what has happened. Now that even the battlefield clearance plan has been rejected, it is impossible for me to remain any longer at my post. I earnestly hope that the High Command will designate a successor to my command of the Kwantung Army, as soon as feasible, to settle matters. Responsibility for past actions rests solely with the Kwantung Army Commander. Since the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff and other subordinate staff officers acted conscientiously in compliance with my intentions, I ask that measures be taken to ensure that no responsibility will be attached to them.

In reply, Gen. Nakajima said:

I shall transmit your desires immediately. As an Army High Command officer concerned, I also am deeply conscious of a sense of responsibility.

Gen. Ueda insisted, however, that the central authorities bore no responsibility; he alone was to blame.

Generals Isogai and Yano then met with Gen. Nakajima. The Kwantung Army Chief of Staff pointed out that only a few days had elapsed between the promulgation of IGHQ Army Order No. 343 (30 August) and the issuance of the climactic Order No. 349 (3 September). The two orders were marked by a wide difference in content, which did not reflect any change in the current war situation.

Indeed, the attitude of Gen. Nakajima went beyond the literal meaning of the Imperial Commands, it was alleged. Pressed for an explanation of the circumstances, the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff said nothing, except simply to repeat: "It is the Imperial Will."

Early in the morning on 5 September, Gen. Ueda asked that Gen. Nakajima visit him at his official residence. There the Kwantung Army Commander said:

Last night I carefully thought things over and reached the conclusion that the order directing me not even to clear the battlefield does not represent the true intention of the Throne. Since this Army is contemplating the execution of battlefield salvage, I wish IGHQ to reconsider the matter.

Once again Gen. Nakajima merely stated that "cessation of clearing operations is an Imperial Command." Shortly afterwards, at 0800 hours, Gen. Nakajima enplaned for Tokyo.

In order to explain to the Army High Command the details of the request lodged with the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff, Gen. Ueda asked Gen. Yano to prepare studies of appropriate measures which should be undertaken. The resultant staff paper was incorporated into the following radio messages transmitted to Tokyo:

Rad Msg No. 739

1st Sec, Kwantung Army

1210 hours, 5 Sep 39

TO: COFS, AGS

FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

1. I humbly received IGHQ Army Order No. 349.

2. In view of fact that 23d Division has waged desperate combat for 70 days, and several thousand bodies of its officers and men still lie on the old battlefields, Kwantung Army intends to employ Sixth Army for salvage work along right bank of Halha River. Thereafter, plan is to withdraw units from disputed area, in accordance with IGHQ Army Order. I beg you to approve above-mentioned Army plan.

If approval is not granted, I will have to violate moral principles which I have been exhorting my officers and men to observe strictly. Moreover, several thousand corpses of officers and men, who died for cause of their country, will be maltreated by enemy. Since I will no longer be able to command Army in such eventuality, please recommend my dismissal to Throne.

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Rad Msg No. 741

1st Sec, Kwantung Army

TO: Minister of War

FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

Regarding personnel action involved in my case, in connection with command of Kwantung Army, I have already indicated my wishes directly to DCOFS, AGS. Moreover, I have submitted my request to COFS, AGS, via 1st Sec, Kwantung Army (ref Rad Msg No. 739).



I trust that you will understand difficult actual situation of my Army, and will take appropriate measures.

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Rad Msg No. 740

1st Sec, Kwantung Army

5 Sep 39

TO: COFS, AGS

FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

I have already conveyed to you, via previous Rad Msg No. 739, my views concerning execution of IGHQ Army Order No. 349. I firmly believe that traditional merit of Imperial Army forces lies in fact that commanding officers and their men transcend selfish interests, and are firmly united like fathers and sons. Three and a half years have already elapsed since I was entrusted with command of Kwantung Army. During this period, I have earnestly endeavored to enhance moral virtues of Imperial Army forces, maintaining a family-like unity of all ranks for service as loyal subjects of Throne. This has been my fundamental principle in commanding Kwantung Army.

Reference execution of IGHQ Army Order No. 349, I am of opinion that recovery of corpses of thousands of officers and men of 23d Division, still lying on field of battle, is only my natural duty in observing Imperial Command. I asked DCOFS, AGS, for his understanding, but he replied as though such battlefield clearance was also prohibited by Imperial Command.

I strongly believe that recovery of bodies of fallen--loyal officers and men who served under my command--is completely in accord with wishes of Throne.

I hereby request again that you consider matter carefully, so that tradition of Imperial Army forces may be forever upheld, and goodness of His Majesty, our Generalissimo, may be manifested.

On the morning of 6 September, the following radio messages were received at Kwantung Army Headquarters:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

FROM: COFS, AGS

5 Sep 39

In view of purport of Imperial Command, I cannot accept your plan proposed via 1st Sec, Kwantung Army Rad Msgs No. 739 and 740. However, I will respectfully report your wishes to Throne tomorrow (6 September).

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AGS Rad Msg No. 330

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

FROM: COFS, AGS

6 Sep 39

1. Your recommendation, and our decision not to adopt that plan, have been respectfully reported to Throne this morning (6 September).

2. I firmly believe that you will abandon your intention, and will immediately commence execution of IGHQ Army Order No. 349.

3. Concerning implementation of order, submit prompt reports concerning actions taken by you.

At almost the same time that Radio Message No. 330 came in, the following message was received from the Ministry of War:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army

FROM: Minister of War

Tokyo, 6 Sep 39

1. Received your Rad Msg No. 741.

2. I heartily sympathize with you. However, you must faithfully carry out Imperial Command and assume responsibility. I believe it is only way whereby you can accomplish duty encharged to you as loyal subject of Throne.

3. Imperial sanction has been granted today for your resignation.

The Kwantung Army Commander thereupon wired the following message to the Chief of the Army General Staff:

TO: COPS, AGS

FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

SUBJ: Reply to AGS Rad Msg No. 330

6 Sep 39

1. I have issued below-cited Order to my units, and have dispatched staff officers to Sixth Army for operational liaison.

Gist of Kwantung Army Order

a. Offensive operations in Nomonhan area have been suspended by Imperial Command.

b. Sixth Army will maintain its positions held during last phase of concentration executed according to prearranged operational plan, and will watch enemy forces. Subsequent movements will be directed later.

c. Air Force will continue with assigned missions.

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2. In view of fact that units operating in sector southeast of Handagai have been under attack by superior enemy forces since day before yesterday [4 Sep 39], Independent Garrison Unit troops will be reinforced, in order to secure strategic points.

On the morning of 7 September, Kwantung Army Headquarters received the following wire from the Sixth Army:

TO: COFS, Kwantung Army

FROM: CG, Sixth Army

1. Received message containing Kwantung Army Operational Order No. 178.

Sixth Army is concentrating on operational preparations in accordance with existing operational plans.

2. In view of heavy losses of life sustained by our forces, no personnel under my command will stop fighting until they have succeeded in inflicting a severe blow against enemy forces and have pushed them back to left bank of Halha River.

Settlement of Incident should be effected through diplomatic negotiations, but enemy forces must be eliminated from right shore of Halha.

3. If time is wasted without undertaking appropriate measures, enemy will further strengthen his positions, and severe cold will set in. We cannot afford to lose opportunity for offensive because of trivial diplomatic matters.

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4. Cp. purport of this wire of 7 Sep 39 with the exhortation allegedly issued by Gen. Ogisu on 5 Sep, in preceding section entitled "New Offensive Plans" (Ch. 9). - Ed.

Gen. Ueda answered the Sixth Army Commander's message as follows:

TO: CG, Sixth Army  
FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

7 Sep 39

I deeply understand your feelings. I also felt that my heart was breaking when I humbly accepted the Imperial Command.

Please exercise greater prudence at this important juncture, and caution forces under your command against taking reckless actions. However, operational preparations to cope with any emergency should be continued until further notice. You must ensure that front-line units do not lose their morale.

Next day, the 23d Division Commander transmitted the following tragic message to Kwantung Army Headquarters:

TO: CG, Kwantung Army  
FROM: CG, 23d Div

1. Lt. Col. Muneharu Higashi, Act CO, 71st Inf Regt, was enveloped by enemy forces at 1930 hours, 30 Aug. After burning regimental colors, he plunged into enemy positions together with 2d Lt. Yukiyoichi [regimental color-bearer] and both died gallantly on right shore of Holsten River.

2. Col. Takemitsu Yamagata, CO, 64th Inf Regt, was surrounded by enemy forces at 1840 hours, 29 Aug. He personally burned regimental colors and committed suicide on right bank of Holsten River.<sup>5</sup>

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5. Cp. preceding version of Col. Yamagata's death, Chapter 9, "Deaths and Suicides." - Ed.

Details will be reported later in writing.

Thus did the curtain ring down on the tragedy at Nomonhan.

#### IGHQ Considerations

Mention has previously been made of the aggravated relations which developed between Kwantung Army Headquarters and the Army High Command authorities. The contemporary Chief of the AGS Operations Section, Col. Seijun Inada, has described the IGHQ attitude toward the Kwantung Army as follows:

There are two ways of controlling an unruly horse: One is to apply the whip mercilessly and drive him until he dies of exhaustion; the other is to control him beforehand by dashing cold water on him. The attempt to save the prestige of the Kwantung Army, while simultaneously smoothing out matters, finally ended in failure. The only alternative now left was to apply the whip mercilessly upon the Kwantung Army. High-handed notions that the Kwantung Army was the sole master of the situation now had to be completely wiped out; this was one way to make up for the tremendous losses sustained by that Army.

On 31 August, the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff was suddenly sent to Hsinking by air. He transmitted the IGHQ order which directed prompt settlement of the affair, and maintenance of a minimum number of troops for sustained warfare in the Nomonhan area. Discussions were held, envisaging that the Kwantung Army should concentrate fighting strength to deliver a knock-out blow against enemy forces stationed along the right shores of the

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6. Inada, loc. cit., Feb 56, p. 35. - Ed.

Halha River, and to withdraw before winter arrived. Gen. Nakajima apparently expressed approval of this contemplated action, but that is not why he had been sent to Hsinking.

After he flew back to Tokyo, Gen. Nakajima received other, sterner IGHQ orders, to the effect that the Kwantung Army should suspend offensive operations and deploy its troops at adequate intervals outside the fighting zone on the right side of the Halha River.

Fully resolved, the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff flew back to Hsinking forthwith. The Kwantung Army Commander called for authorization to collect the 23d Division's dead, abandoned in Russian-held areas, but his request was flatly refused by Gen. Nakajima, for the reason that such action would only result in a repetition of the previous situation. Thus Gen. Nakajima turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of Gen. Ueda, of the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff, and of other staff officers, and returned to Tokyo.

The Kwantung Army wondered why the attitude of the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff had changed so suddenly, and dispatched a detailed and sincere message to the Chief of the Army General Staff, concerning its intentions. However, the wired reply from the High Command conveyed a rigid and stern order, to the effect that the Kwantung Army must abandon its present intentions, and report immediately concerning actions to be taken to implement the order. ...

The Incident ended suddenly, for on 1 Sep 39 World War II broke out in Europe. Germany and the U.S.S.R. had allied themselves. In Japan a Cabinet change occurred.<sup>7</sup>

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7. The Hiranuma Cabinet fell on 28 Aug 39, and was replaced by the Abe Government on the 30th. - Ed.

Gen. Gun Hashimoto, Col. Inada's superior (as Chief of the AGS Operations Bureau), sheds further light on the High Command's contemporary outlook:<sup>8</sup>

When the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was concluded [23 Aug 39] winter cold was already setting in around Hulun Buir. The advent of bitter winter was imminent, and the High Command was very eager to settle the Incident beforehand.

...In order to make up for the deficiency of military strength for the defense of Manchuria, the High Command considered pulling out two divisions from the forces in China, but as a result of further investigation of the real situation, it judged that throwing in large forces might, to the contrary, make a speedy settlement of the Incident more difficult. Thus the plan for transferring the two divisions was abandoned.

[After Gen. Nakajima flew to Hsinking on 30 August], the High Command expected that the Kwantung Army, by the terms of the new orders, would change its battle [plans]. However, it was made clear that the dispute should be settled after the Army had dealt a hard blow against the enemy forces, with reinforced military strength, as based upon the primary plan. Just then, the European War broke out.

The High Command therefore judged that the time had come to settle the dispute through diplomatic negotiation, and hurriedly sent the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff, Gen. Nakajima, again to Hsinking, to deliver an order that, in view of the present situation, henceforth the High Command would attempt to settle the border troubles in the Nomonhan area autonomously; the Kwantung Army Commander should suspend offensive actions in that region.

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8. Based upon IMTFC, Transcript, 20 May 47, pp. 22,599-601.  
- Ed.



At the time the Kwantung Army had already issued offensive orders, and its units were consequently going to start military actions on 10 September. The Army Commander was in an awkward position. Thereupon the central authorities speeded up personnel affairs action, and a new commander took over on 8 September....

The steps taken by IGHQ concerning the Nomonhan Incident were carried out in complete agreement with the War Ministry authorities; there was no difference of opinion between them.

#### Transfers and Demotions

In the course of the abortive Japanese offensive in August, many key officers were killed in action or committed suicide, as mentioned previously. It did not take long to reshuffle the survivors and bring in "new blood." On the night of 6 September, Kwantung Army Headquarters received advance notice from the War Ministry that the following Kwantung Army officers were being transferred to Army General Staff Headquarters in Tokyo: Gen. Ueda, Army Commander; Gen. Isogai, Chief of Staff; Gen. Yano, Deputy Chief of Staff; and Col. Terada, Chief, Operations Section. Maj. Tsuji, of the Operations Section Staff, was bound for Eleventh Army Headquarters, Hankow. On 8 September, Lt. Col. Hattori, senior staff officer at Kwantung Army Headquarters, was appointed to the research division and concurrently to the faculty of the Army Infantry School (Chiba, Japan).

The newly designated Commanding General and staff members of the Kwantung Army comprised the following officers:

CG, Kwantung Army	: Lt. Gen. Yoshijiro Umezu
COFS	: Lt. Gen. Jo Iimura
DCOFS	: Maj. Gen. Saburo Endo
Chief, 1st Sec (Opns)	: Col. Yadoru Arisue
Staff Officer, 1st Sec (Opns)	: Maj. Noriyasu Shimamura

The reshuffle or demotion of officers concerned with the Nomon-han Incident affected not only Kwantung Army Headquarters but also front-line commanders in Manchuria and the High Command authorities in Tokyo as well. In addition to the five regimental commanders presumed to have committed suicide (see previous text), the following combat officers were "punished":

Lt. Col. Iwao Yotsuya, CO, IGU Bn: Suspended from duty for one year and then transferred to first reserve.

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Col. Nobuteru Takatsukasa, CO, 7th Hv FA Regt:

His regiment was routed after two of [a battery's] four heavy guns had fallen to the enemy, and he was suspended from duty and ordered to remain at Hsinking for one year. The colonel...was a baron, and he was deprived of the privileges of a peer; one year later, he was transferred to the first reserve. ...for a heavy artillery regiment, which has no colors, the loss of a heavy gun was regarded as serious as the loss of regimental colors.

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9. Supplementary data based upon Sumi article, loc. cit., 7 Aug 55, p. 35. - Ed.

If Col. Takatsukasa had been a commoner [says Col. Sumi], he would have been ordered to commit suicide like Lt. Col. Ioki.

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Col. Shinichiro Sumi, CO, 26th Inf Regt, 7th Div:

My regiment [writes Col. Sumi] was composed of tough Hokkaido men, who fought well. I believed that I had not failed in my command and was above reprimand; but it was my turn to be punished. I was demoted immediately after I was attached to Kwantung Army Headquarters, was suspended from duty, and soon met the same fate as Col. Takatsukasa. The charges against me were somewhat different from those against the others. I was accused of disobedience. Allegedly I made a useless operational suggestion to a staff officer at the front line; i.e., I was supposed to have protested when he said that I had disobeyed him by advancing two kilometers too far.

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According to Col. Sumi, the punishments inflicted upon the front-line commanders by the Kwantung Army soon became an issue among the central authorities. War Ministry section chiefs raised objections, asserting that it was unreasonable to hold front-line regimental commanders primarily responsible for the defeat. Then Col. Ryukichi Tanaka felt that General Staff and Kwantung Army Headquarters staff officers should also have been held responsible.

Col. Saburo Hayashi, Assistant Military Attache to Moscow at the time of Nomonhan, states that although a certain number of general officers on the General Staff and at Kwantung Army Headquarters

were subsequently retired from active service (as we have seen),<sup>10</sup>

...many of the staff officers of the Operations Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters, who were said to have been mainly responsible for the Incident, were only transferred to easy posts. Indeed, they were soon promoted to important positions in Tokyo. Some of them obtained key posts in the IGHQ Operations Section; their demotion was obviously only perfunctory. This is an example of the unfair personnel administration in the Army. Despite the avowed policy of fairly punishing every fault committed by military men, the Army personnel authorities were in fact apt to overlook faults committed by jin-goists while, on the other hand, moderate men were often treated as cowards and punished severely if they made mistakes. All persons who held high posts in Tokyo at that time now admit that the officers who were responsible for the Nomonhan Incident and who were later transferred to the IGHQ Operations Section were strong advocates of the Pacific War in 1941.

In the High Command reshuffle after Nomonhan, two general officers were retired: Gen. Nakajima (Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff) and Gen. Hashimoto (Chief, Operations Bureau). Col. Seijun Inada, AGS Operations Section head, was afterwards demoted to a subordinate post.

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10. Hayashi, op. cit., p. 25. - Ed.

## CHAPTER 11

### DIPLOMACY, NEGOTIATIONS AND FINALE

#### Background

Since the 17th Century, the vicinity of Nomonhan has been the boundary line separating the pastoral plains of the Halha Mongols of Hulun Buir, and the Kalmucks of Outer Mongolia. During the era of the Ching Dynasty, in 1734, the Chinese authorities fixed the boundaries between the rival nomads. Border disputes occurred constantly thereafter, with the stronger tribesmen controlling the region in succession for two centuries. No definitive border line was ever drawn or observed.

With the founding of Manchukuo, the border area around Nomonhan became the scene of disputes between the Outer Mongolian "People's Republic" and the Manchu authorities. Behind the respective regimes, the Soviet Union and Japan exerted decisive influence upon the border controversies. Since the strength of the Kwantung Army far exceeded that of the Soviet Far Eastern Army between 1931 and 1935, no border disputes broke out during that period. The Manchukuoan Government unilaterally contended that the valley of the Halha River represented the natural boundary between Manchuria and Outer Mongolia. The situation became aggravated, however, after the Russians gradually built up their Far Eastern military strength, and instituted far more stringent control over Outer

Mongolia than did Japan over Manchukuo. Border disputes erupted with increasing frequency, since the Soviet Union instigated the Outer Mongols to action.

Local fighting broke out in 1935 when Outer Mongolians violated the frontier near Halhaziao. The Manchukuoan Government attempted to reach a settlement with the Mongols through diplomatic negotiations, but no accord was reached. The following year (1936), the Soviets and the Outer Mongolians concluded a mutual assistance pact,<sup>1</sup> after which the Mongols' attitude stiffened,<sup>2</sup> relying upon Soviet strength. The historic boundary disputes along the Halha River flared again and gradually worsened, until whole divisions eventually fought each other across the vast and inherently valueless grassy steppes around Nomonhan.

Manchukuo's claim that the Halha River was the border derived from the 200-year-old assertion of the Halha Mongol tribesmen. Between 1931 and 1935, neither the Russians nor the Outer

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1. Pact signed at Ulan Bator, 12 Mar 36, incorporating a hitherto unpublished "gentleman's agreement" reached between the U.S.S.R. and Outer Mongolia in Nov 34. - Ed.

2. On 31 May 39, Foreign Commissar Molotov made the following statement to the Supreme Soviet: "I give warning that the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic, by virtue of the mutual assistance treaty concluded between us, will be defended by the U.S.S.R. just as vigorously as we shall defend our own borders." D. J. Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1942 (New Haven, 1942), p. 225. - Ed.

Mongolians objected to this claim, nor lodged a protest. After 1935, however, the Reds asserted that the frontier lay well east of the Halha, and resorted to armed incursions, starting with the Halhamiao affair and culminating in the bloody Nomonhan Incident.

It may, at first glance, appear difficult to comprehend why the Japanese Army found it necessary to risk its fate in a struggle for grasslands valuable only to nomads. The fighting, however, represented no merely localized struggle for a few square kilometers of barren steppe; instead, the fate of two entire peoples--the eastern and the western Mongols--depended upon mastery of the region, as for the past two centuries. The Nomonhan Incident should be viewed within this broader context.

#### Early Protests

After Outer Mongolian forces clashed with Manchukuoan border garrison elements near Nomonhan (inside the state frontier, according to Hsinking's contention), the Manchukuoan Government lodged a strongly worded protest with the Prime Minister of the Outer Mongolian People's Republic (15 May 1939). The note denounced the unlawful action of the Outer Mongol troops, demanded their immediate withdrawal and the restoration of the original boundary line (the Halha River). Kwantung Army Headquarters transmitted the following message to the High Command, concerning settlement of the Incident:

TO: DCOFS  
Vice Minister of War

FROM: COFS, Kwantung Army

Hainking, 23 May 39

Regarding border violation by Outer Mongolian forces in vicinity of Nomonhan, southwest of Hailar plain: On 15 May, Manchukuoan Government strongly demanded that Outer Mongolians withdraw troops and restore original frontier. In view of vital nature of Incident, we cannot but submit affair to local settlement by arms, for time being. Study of measures to be undertaken for diplomatic negotiation is now underway.

In view of progress of negotiations hitherto effected between Manchukuo and Outer Mongolia concerning Halhamiao Incident and other similar matters, we intend to regard problem as issue involving only two cited countries. We plan to achieve local settlement on basis that Manchukuo has only exercised right of self-defense. It is reported, however, that Molotov delivered note of protest to Ambassador Togo at Moscow. If Soviet Union attempts to intervene in future, Japanese and Manchukuoan authorities must unify their opinions beforehand. We are accordingly studying countermeasures and assertions to be made relative to border incident.

On 3 June, Kwantung Army Headquarters received the following reply from Tokyo:

Military Affairs Sec, War Ministry  
Rad Msg No. 879

TO: COFS, Kwantung Army

FROM: Vice Minister of War

Should diplomatic negotiations necessitate clarification of border line, we should insist



that our boundary is and always has been Halha River.

High Command Liaison

From past experience, the Kwantung Army authorities originally felt that the settlement of the border dispute around Nomonhan depended solely upon the use of armed force. Little was expected from diplomatic negotiations. Although the Kwantung Army had had Manchukuo submit a formal protest to Outer Mongolia immediately after the outbreak of the Incident, diplomatic involvement was thereafter avoided. The Army rather feared that if Japan proposed armistice parleys, they would only serve to stiffen the attitudes of the opposing sides. Accordingly, Kwantung Army Headquarters repeatedly advised Tokyo to avoid diplomatic negotiations, in order to maintain the nation's prestige.

On 17 July, after the Japanese offensive was deadlocked, the Kwantung Army wired the following recommendations to the High Command:

Kwantung Army Staff Msg No. 776

TO: Minister of War  
COFS, AGS

FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

In view of gravity of current situation, there is apparently no other means of settling Incident than submission of matter to diplomatic negotiation between Japan and U.S.S.R. Indicate firm determination that

we would not hesitate to sever diplomatic relations if necessary.

I hope that you will maintain firm attitude and try to guide Russo-Japanese negotiations, considering development of situation and our military posture in Manchuria, which has been strengthened.

The High Command wired the following instructions, received at Kwantung Army Headquarters on 28 July:

AGS Rad Msg No. 19

TO: COFS, Kwantung Army

FROM: DCOFs, AGS

You are hereby informed that, in case we enter upon armistice negotiations (in accordance with War Ministry Mil Affairs Sec Msg No. 83), following conditions have been determined:

1. Every effort will be made to lay down condition that troops of both sides will not cross Halha River.

2. If (1) above cannot be realized, stipulation should be made that troops of both sides will not advance from their present positions after certain prescribed time; or will be pulled back equal distances from present positions.

By Order of Chief of Staff

At the time, the Kwantung Army's intention was to secure the entire right bank of the Halha River at any cost. It was feared that the conclusion of an armistice agreement, while enemy troops were still occupying areas on the right shore, would only result

in a second Changkufeng debacle. Utmost precautions must be taken, lest friendly troops fall into a trap and sustain heavy losses. If, however, the Soviets proposed an armistice, the Kwantung Army had no intention of rejecting the overture, of course. In view of the attitude which the High Command had manifested when the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff visited Tokyo (20 July), Hsinking greatly feared that the central authorities might, on their own initiative, readily propose an armistice to the Russians if the Kwantung Army seemed to favor a cease-fire.

AGS Radio Message No. 19 mentioned no Japanese proposal for an armistice nor did it solicit the Kwantung Army's views; it simply "informed" Hsinking of the conditions for a cease-fire. Although no reply was required, the Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army felt that it was necessary to clarify his Army's attitude toward any possible agreement, and he accordingly dispatched the following communication:

TO: DCOFS, AGS

FROM: COFS, Kwantung Army

SUBJ: Reply to AGS Rad Msg No. 19

1. We agree that we should enter upon negotiations in case diplomatic talks concerning armistice are proposed by Soviet side. If, however, Army High Command intends to propose armistice, we emphatically cannot concur; this would indicate concession by Japanese side. Such action would merely serve to encourage enemy forces, who are now facing difficulties in operations and supplies; and would eventually lead

to enlargement of Incident. Current situation in local region clearly proves this fact.

2. Reference conditions for armistice, any agreement to pull back our front line should not be made. It would mean acceptance of Soviet assertions (same experience as in Changkufeng Incident).

If we desire to preserve international positions of both Japan and Manchukuo, while guiding the latter, we cannot tolerate any such agreement. We firmly believe that, under circumstances, best policy is to maintain lines of our own choice, and to wear down enemy by resorting to protracted operations.

3. According to intelligence reports obtained to date, Soviet attitude is extremely firm. Even if armistice were proposed by our side, Russians would reject it; and, to contrary, they would exploit fact for propaganda purposes.

The day after Kwantung Army Headquarters sent its reply to AGS Radio Message No. 19, an IGHQ operations staff officer, Maj. Shimamura, flew in from Tokyo. The local authorities asked him about the real attitude of the High Command toward an armistice. Maj. Shimamura replied:

Negotiations are now underway between Japan and the Soviet Union concerning the Sakhalin problem. Since the Soviet delegates will probably touch upon the Nomonhan Incident during these negotiations, our central authorities may be preparing armistice plans. However, I think that they have no intention of proposing a cease-fire on their own initiative.

Relieved by Maj. Shimamura's statement, the Kwantung Army thereafter made no further representations to the High Command concerning

the subject of an armistice.

IGHQ Army Order No. 343 of 30 August called upon the Kwantung Army to resist with minimum strength in the Nomonhan area. It was later learned that at the time of the issuance of this order, the High Command had already decided upon the following policy, which was not disclosed to Kwantung Army Headquarters:

In order to adjust diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union, and to settle border issues in particular, negotiations will be opened by us. General problems will be the first stage in the parleys, after which an effort will be made to achieve a local armistice for the time being.

Precautions will be taken, however, lest our action be interpreted as an indication of eagerness.

On 3 September, IGHQ issued Army Order No. 349, which reversed the preceding instructions; now the Kwantung Army was to suspend all offensive operations in the Nomonhan area. Once again it was not learned until later that the High Command had already drafted plans which were not made known to Hsinking at the time that Army Order No. 349 was dispatched:

#### Plan

As soon as Japanese troops deployed in the vicinity of Nomonhan have been generally concentrated for an offensive, Japan will initiate diplomatic negotiations with the Soviet Union, envisaging the settlement of general problems between the two countries, while planning to normalize diplomatic relations.

In case war breaks out in Europe, Japan will take advantage of the new situation without delay.

Attache's Messages

On 3 September Col. Doi, the Military Attache at Moscow, submitted the following opinions to the High Command, with an information copy to the Kwantung Army (to be used as "reference material" only):

TO: DCOFS, AGS

FROM: ARMA, Moscow

I herewith submit my respectful opinions concerning adjustment of Russo-Japanese diplomatic relations in connection with Manchukuo-Mongolia [Nomonhan] Incident.

1. As previously reported, in light of recent relations between Japan, the U.S.S.R., and Germany, it would prove advantageous for Japan to conclude non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia, if possible. Since World War II has already broken out, however, U.S.S.R. will not necessarily agree to German arbitration. Therefore, no other alternative exists than to propose mere normalization of diplomatic relations and settlement of disputes.

Said proposal should not be made now, when our troops have already made unexpected withdrawal, but sometime after they have launched large-scale counterattack.

2. It is doubtful whether Soviet Russia will accept our proposal. Since she holds us in contempt and boasts that she has already forced our troops across the borders, it is likely that she will take advantage of our proposal to drive our forces even farther back

from frontier. However, if and when--after our counterattack--we tender such a compromise suggestion as to withdraw our troops from disputed zone and temporarily neutralize said zone pending further negotiations, Soviet Union might accept our proposal.

3. Army, for its part, must be prepared for countermeasures, in view of possibility that U.S.S.R. may reject our proposal. In other words (as earlier stated) Army must not assume positions near Halha River, where war of attrition might ensue. Main forces must stand by for action outside disputed sector, while constructing modern fortifications in order to be able to seize complete control of disputed zone at any time. (From political standpoint, it is advisable to construct permanent fortifications outside border line which Soviets are claiming). Moreover, we must undertake construction of railroads as well as military installations suitable for protracted quartering of large forces. It is thus necessary to manifest our resolve and preparedness.

Not only would above-cited measures fully meet our own requirements should Soviet Russia turn down our proposal, but they would also serve as deterrent to Soviet rejection.

4. Even if U.S.S.R. rejects our proposal after our counteroffensive is launched, all-out war will not develop, because Soviet Union will consider it disadvantageous to initiate open hostilities over such an issue, in view of domestic conditions. In addition, with outbreak of European War, Russia will have to prepare for any emergency, although Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact is still in force. To be ready to fulfill her own plans according to changes in situation, U.S.S.R. can never reduce strength on western frontiers.

As before, however, Soviet Union will not abandon plans of restoring [Outer Mongolian]

border line to which she is laying claim.

If Japan yields to Soviet contentions during Russo-Japanese negotiations, agreement might be reached at once. Such an attitude cannot be adopted, however, because it would not only impair our national prestige but would invite Soviet Union's extreme contempt, and would result in eventual bolstering of Russian aid to China.

Such being case, negotiations must be conducted on equal footing, after undertaking sufficient military preparations against U.S.S.R. Local authorities should also make efforts in accord with this policy.

In other words, we should know better than to underestimate Soviet national power and will to fight; nor should we try to make U.S.S.R. bend to our demands by recourse to make-shift measures. We must furthermore exert greater efforts to complete war preparations, while intensifying home front policies and unity of nation. Only by strengthening these preparations against Soviet Union can purpose of negotiations be achieved.

On 5 September, Kwantung Army Headquarters received an information copy of another message transmitted by the Military Attache at Moscow to his superiors in Tokyo. This wire too was marked "for reference use only."

TO: DCOFS, AGS

FROM: ARMA, Moscow

Received AGS Rad Msg No. 294 [concerning suspension of offensive operations at Nomonhan] with heart-breaking grief. Responsibility keenly felt.

Although I believe that policy toward Soviet Union has already been determined, I send



this message for your information.

1. Have given up resumption of diplomatic negotiations conducted in accordance with your esteemed AGS Rad Msg No. 276; even if we did resume talks at present stage, we would have no choice but to recognize Soviet border claims.

2. If Soviet Russia judges that our forces will tolerate her actions without attempting counterattacks, she will publicize her victory, as previously reported. She will take especial advantage of unity of her people in order to stimulate confidence in assured victory over Japan. Although we can judge that Soviet Union will not hereafter attack our troops across borders which she is claiming in disputed zone, we cannot nevertheless discount possibility that Red Army (which is more elated over its operational success than was the case at Changkufeng) will undertake aggressive actions in other places, especially in disputed areas where border lines are indistinct.

It is needless to say, however, that Soviet Union, on whole, has no intention of taking positive action against Japan.

3. In view of preceding circumstances, we must concentrate our strength even though it involves great sacrifices on part of those concerned. At same time, while threatening U.S.S.R. with counterattack, we must carry out preparations for fortifications, communications, and winter quarters. Thus, by exhibiting our constant readiness to counterattack, we must check Soviet Union's excessively contemptuous and arrogant attitude; they will not then attempt to precipitate second or third 'Nomonhan incidents' on other fronts.

In this connection, we believe that situation has now taken worst turn which could possibly have been anticipated. Therefore, as we have previously urged, authorities concerned should exert great efforts to step up preparations vs. U.S.S.R. and to strengthen domestic wartime setup without delay, in order

to prevent unexpected hostilities from breaking out.

4. Now is not time for normalization of our ties with Soviet Union, which new [Abe] Cabinet was called upon to achieve; we should postpone things for a while. In relations with Soviet Union, only present undertaking should be effort to maintain silence. That is, we must change our attitude of carelessly underestimating U.S.S.R. or dealing with her highhandedly. It will be advisable for us to do our best not to antagonize Russians, unless they become absolutely intolerable.

#### Cease-Fire

In accordance with policies laid down by the central authorities, the reshuffled Kwantung Army command reported on the measures which it had taken by 10 September:

TO: DCOFS, AGS

FROM: COFS, Kwantung Army

10 Sep 39, Hsinking

With view toward settling Nomonhan Incident according to below-cited policy, Army today dispatched DCOFS to locale of fighting.

1. Main force of Sixth Army, stationed in vicinity of Nomonhan, will successively withdraw from present locations and will return to original duty stations. Time for commencement of withdrawal scheduled for 20 September.

2. Necessary strength will be left behind in vicinity of Handagai in order to secure that area and carry out projected construction of railroad.

Strength to be retained during winter totals approximately one mixed brigade, stationed west of Arshaan.

Depending upon situation, above-mentioned plan may be suspended, and railroad construction resumed next spring 1940.

3. Air Force will continue to perform present missions for time being.

Meanwhile, since late August, Ambassador Shigenori Togo and Foreign Commissar Molotov had been conducting parleys, details of which are presented in Appendix G. After the fourth session between the diplomats, a cease-fire agreement was eventually signed in Moscow, at 1530 hours on 15 September.<sup>3</sup>

Next day, at 0300 hours, Lt. Col. Okikazu Arao of the IGHQ Operations Section, telephoned Lt. Col. Gempu Nakayama, operations staff officer at Kwantung Army Headquarters:

1. Although Japan and U.S.S.R. have reached agreement on cease-fire, it has not yet been signed.

2. Since time for ceasing fire is close at hand, Army will notify its front-line troops in advance concerning contents of Imperial Command and IGHQ Army Directive about cessation of hostilities, in order to give them sufficient time to prepare therefor.

At 0600 hours on 16 September, the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff proceeded to the Palace to receive the Emperor's sanction

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3. Kaikosha Kiji, Oct 39, #781, p. 79. - Ed.

for the Imperial Command. At 0700 Col. Seijun Inada (IGHQ Operations Section Chief) telephoned the following message to Col. Yadoru Arisue, the new Chief of the Kwantung Army's Operations Section:

1. Imperial Command has been issued.
2. Since no report of signature of cease-fire agreement has been received yet, we will not issue directive for time being.
3. If cease-fire is effected on battlefield, notify us immediately, so that appropriate directive can be issued.

Army must remain strictly on alert, however, taking into account possibility that agreement will not be signed.

To the preceding phone call from the High Command, Col. Arisue replied as follows:

1. As of 0800 hours today 16 September, front-line troops are maintaining strict alert, ready to effect cease-fire. There is possibility that they will open separate negotiations at front.
2. Members of our cease-fire delegation include: Colonels Kusumoto and Kimura; Majors Shimamura, Ogoishi, and Nyumura (language officer).

At 0625 hours on 16 September, the following Imperial Command was formally issued:

IGHQ Army Order No. 357

1. Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will hereafter suspend hostile activity against Soviet-Mongolian forces in Nomonhan area (including vicinity of Handagai).

2. Detailed directives will be issued by  
COFS, AGS.

\* \* \* \* \*

IGHQ Army Directive No. 551

Per IGHQ Army Order No. 357, following directive is hereby issued:

Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will handle matters which he, as front-line Army Commander, deems necessary, in accordance with following Appendix.

Appendix: Joint Communiqué on Nomonhan  
Truce Agreement<sup>4</sup>

(As result of negotiations recently carried on between Ambassador Togo and Foreign Commissar Molotov, two parties (Japan and Manchukuo, on one hand; U.S.S.R. and Outer Mongolian Republic, on other) have arrived at following agreement):

1. All military action on part of both sides shall cease at 0200 hours, 16 Sep 39, Moscow time.

2. Front line of both sides shall revert to status as of 1300 hours, 15 Sep 39, Moscow time.

3. Representatives of both sides on spot shall immediately take steps necessary to implement agreement cited in Paragraphs (1) and (2) above.

4. Prisoners-of-war and corpses shall be exchanged. Representatives of both sides on spot shall immediately make arrangements for exchange and commence execution of same.

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4. Amplified version based upon DMTFE, Transcript, 28 May 47, pp. 23,141-43. - Ed.

(Moreover, in course of negotiations between Mr. Togo and Mr. Molotov, both parties have agreed to establish, as soon as possible, Commission composed of two Soviet-Mongolian representatives and two Japanese-Manchukuoan representatives, with aim of determining border line of Mongolian People's Republic and Manchukuo in regions where there has recently been conflict. Commission will start functioning as soon as it is organized).<sup>5</sup>

Upon receipt of IGHQ Army Order No. 357 (and its accompanying directive), Kwantung Army Headquarters immediately dispatched the following wire:

TO: DCOFS, AGS

FROM: COFS, Kwantung Army

1. We have respectfully received IGHQ Army Order No. 357.

2. Regarding cease-fire, we have formed local armistice delegation and have dispatched it to area in dispute, according to prearranged program.

COFS, Kwantung Army, simultaneously proceeded to locale of Incident and sought to achieve satisfactory results by maintaining liaison with Sixth Army.

3. Names of principal members of local cease-fire delegation follow: Maj. Gen. Fujimoto (Chief); Colonels Kimura and Kusumoto; Majors Shimamura, Ogoshi, and Nyumura.

On 17 September the following message was received from Col.

Doi, the Japanese Military Attache in Moscow:

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5. Parenthetical paragraphs not included in original Appendix attached to IGHQ Army Directive 551, but may be found in official joint communique. Ibid., pp. 23,142-43. - Ed.

TO: DCOFS, AGS

FROM: AFMA, Moscow

Observations till recent conclusion of cease-fire agreement reveal following information.

Soviet Union has withdrawn claim, made from outset, that alleged border line is distinct and should be so recognized. Russians have instead proposed that a border demarcation committee be formed immediately for purpose of clearly defining boundary. This move is apparently aimed mainly at preventing conflict in Far East, since U.S.S.R. has already conducted large-scale mobilization to cope with situation in Europe.

Measure was taken, moreover, because Soviets took into consideration our war preparations and advent of cold season. Russians were also fully confident that border demarcation issue would be easily settled and that further fighting would prove disadvantageous to them.

At Nomonhan, the first of two armistice meetings was conducted at 1600 hours on 18 September, in a tent pitched in no man's land near the Halha River. The Russians sent a major-general and eight delegates; the Japanese, Maj.-Gen. Fujimoto and ten delegates. After a 3½ hour session, the Chief of Staff of the Sixth Army (Gen. Fujimoto) wired the following message to Tokyo:

TO: DCOFS, AGS  
Vice Minister of War

FROM: COFS, Sixth Army

18 Sep 39

Cease-fire delegation reached frank understanding with Soviet delegation at conference lasting from 1600 to 1930 hours today.

1. Soviet delegation expressed no objection to our proposal that concrete agreement be concluded to maintain armistice and prevent misunderstandings. They plotted cease-fire positions on map and assured us that they would deliver reply after receiving approval from senior officer in area.

2. Soviet delegation proposed, in all sincerity, that every corpse and prisoner-of-war be exchanged within about one week, in truce zone midway between both armies. Concerning our proposal that bodies of our men lying in area controlled by Soviet Army be collected by our unarmed soldiers, Russians assured us that they would reply after reporting matter to senior officer.

3. Soviet delegation promised to meet with us again at 1600 hours tomorrow (19 Sep), and give replies concerning previously cited matters.

The Japanese had every intention of concluding a complete agreement during the second conference on 19 September, and the Soviet delegates co-operated fully. A communique was issued on the same day, summarizing the accords reached:

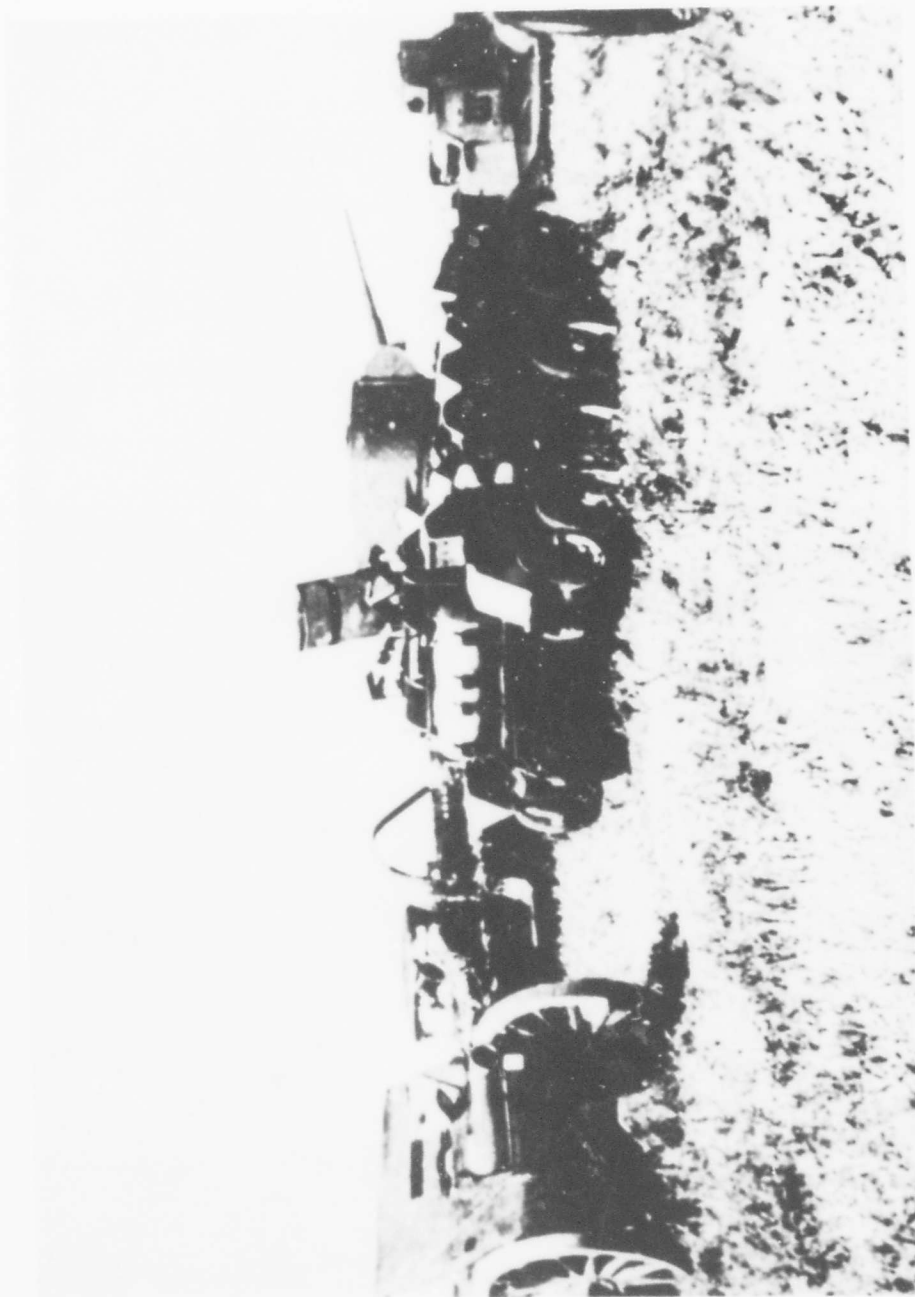
1. The local authorities of both sides recognize the Togo-Molotov cease-fire agreement. Hostilities will hereafter cease on the Hailar Plain.

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6. Supplementary data based upon Kaikosha Kiji, Oct 39, #781, pp. 79-80. - Ed.



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 5



MAI/NICHI SHIMBUN PHOTO

CAPTURED SOVIET ARMY EQUIPMENT, NOMONHAN AREA, AUG 39:  
NEWEST 120-MM. HOWITZER (L.), ARTILLERY TRUCK (L. REAR); MEDIUM  
TANK (CENTER); ARMORED CAR (R.); REGIMENTAL GUN (EXTREME R.).

2. Neither army will receive reinforcements, nor will they strengthen existing positions.

3. Both armies will exchange maps indicating their present positions, as a means of establishing the cease-fire line.

4. Under the supervision of officer representatives from both armies, corpses will be exchanged in the no man's land midway between the forwardmost lines of both sides, near the Halha River. The exchange will take place between 21-25 September. Corpses found in no man's land itself will be conveyed freely to the other side.

5. Soviet prisoners taken by the Japanese side will be delivered by truck to the agreed-upon site of exchange within no man's land. Japanese prisoners captured by the Soviet side are very few in number and seriously wounded, and it would be difficult to load them on trucks. They will therefore be delivered to the Japanese forward lines by Soviet aircraft. The exchange of prisoners will commence on 19 September and will be concluded within one week.

6. The line established by the local authorities for cease-fire purposes has no bearing upon the problem of definitive demarcation of the frontier.

#### Observations on Soviet Attitude

Throughout the armistice parleys, the atmosphere was amicable.

No antagonistic attitude or speech was noticed on the part of the Soviets. The Japanese could see that the Russians were apparently anxious to achieve the prompt implementation of cease-fire measures. Says Col. Inada:

The attitude of the Soviet delegates at the time of the signing was very polite and conciliatory. They even willingly agreed to our proposal that the remaining corpses in Russian-held territory be recovered by our men. They said that they had been ordered by Moscow to do so. This was because the Nazi German forces were then sweeping over all of Poland, and the U.S.S.R. was very intent upon seizing its share in that successful campaign.

In the Changkufeng Incident, the Soviets had widely publicized their "successful" battle, taking advantage of our voluntary withdrawal. This time, however, they kept silent although they had actually won the victory. ... The Soviet Union did not take the risk [of outright war] because it was then so intent on carrying out its five-year industrial plan, and because the European situation was growing acute.

### Casualties

A recapitulation of casualty data indicates the severity of the fighting at Nomonhan. (Also see Photographs No. 5-8). The Soviet Russians and the Outer Mongolians admitted losing a total of 9,000-9,500. The Japanese lost 18,000 officers and men, ac-

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7. Inada, loc. cit., Feb 56, p. 36. - Ed.

cording to their own records, although then-Gen. Zhukov (the Soviet corps commander in the Nomonhan area) later claimed that Japan lost 52,000-55,000.<sup>8</sup>

We have already seen that the Japanese 23d Division alone suffered over 10,000 casualties, out of a T/O strength of 13,000 plus reinforcements. By the end of August, the 26th Regiment of the 7th Division had lost all but 300 officers<sup>9</sup> and men, from an original strength of 1,500.

The war in the air was no less severe than the ground fighting. When the Kwantung Army Commander bestowed a unit citation upon Gen. Giga and the Air Force on 5 September, he alluded to a total of 1,143 Soviet aircraft destroyed in the course of more than 100 air-to-air battles during the entire Nomonhan Incident. The Japanese lost one air regimental commander (Col. Abe, CO, 15th Air Regt)<sup>10</sup> and 150 pilots killed or wounded. Other reliable Japanese sources state that 1,252 Soviet planes were destroyed (plus 186 probables)<sup>11</sup> at a loss of 149 Japanese aircraft.

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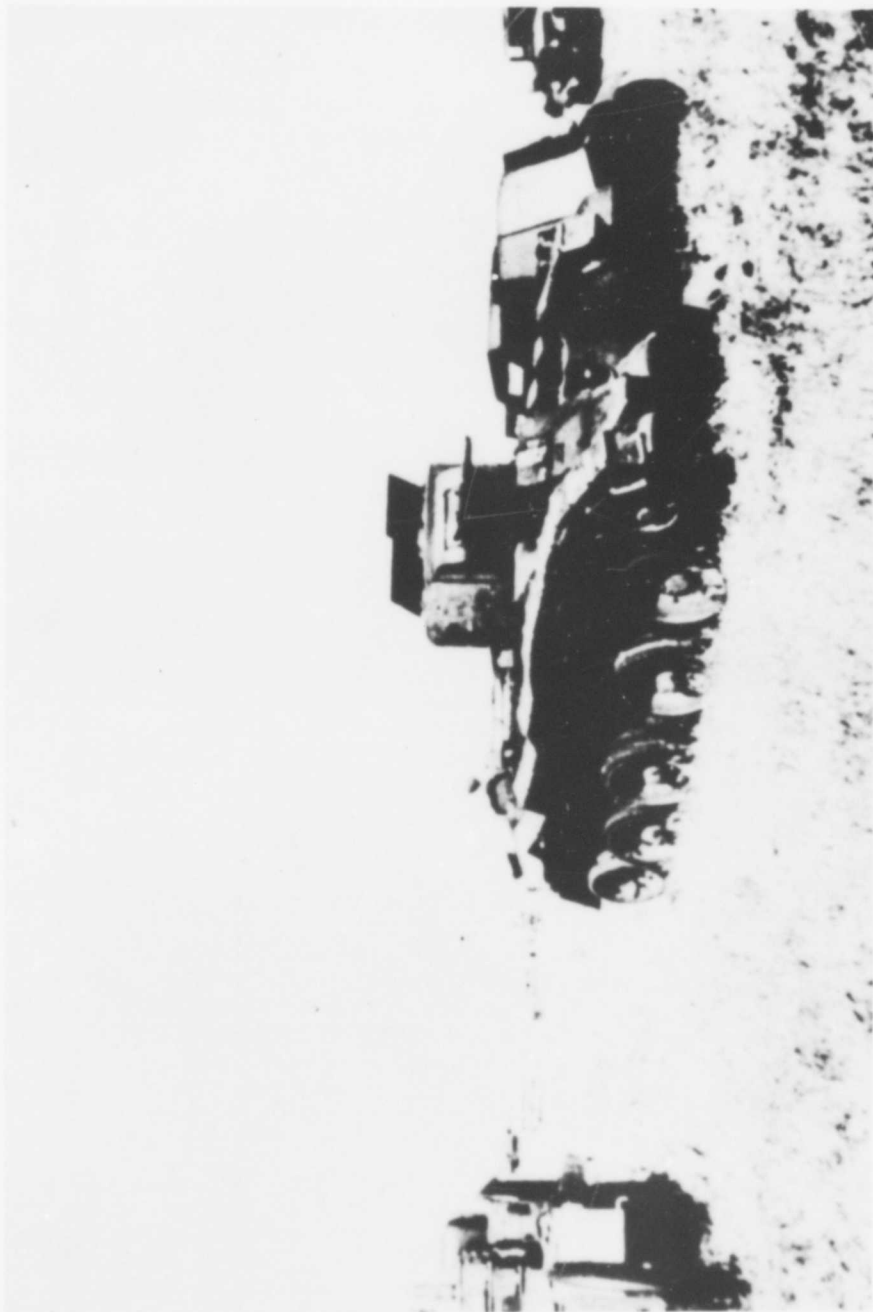
8. Examination of Soviet Army Maj. A. E. Bykov, IMTFE, Transcript, 27 Jan 48, pp. 38,370, 38,372. - Ed.

9. Only one 37-mm. battalion gun was left to the regiment by then, from an original six pieces. Sumi, loc. cit., 7 Aug 55, p. 14. - Ed.

10. Kaikosha Kiji, Dec 39, #783, p. 37. - Ed.

11. Data provided by Lt. Col. Minoru Miyashi, Air Operations Staff Officer at Kwantung Army Headquarters during the latter stages of the Nomonhan Incident. - Ed.

PHOTOGRAPH NO. 6



CAPTURED SOVIET ARMY MECHANIZED EQUIPMENT,  
NOMONHAN AREA, AUG 39. PHOTO  
MAINICHI SHINBUN

### Combat Lessons

Except where otherwise noted, this section is primarily based upon data provided by the following officers (ranks and assignments as of the time of the Nomonhan Incident):

Lt. Gen. Waichiro Sonobe,  
CG, 7th Div;

Col. Seijun Inada,  
Chief, Opns Sec, IGHQ;

Col. Shinichiro Sumi,  
CO, 26th Inf Regt, 7th Div;

Lt. Col. Takushiro Hattori,  
Sr Opns Staff Officer, Hq Kwantung Army;

Lt. Col. Kazuo Murasawa,  
Staff Officer, Hq Kwantung Army;

Maj. Takeji Shimanuki,  
do.;

Capt. Masataka Iwata,  
Chief, OP Sec, Hq 3d Hv  
FA Brig.

### General Comparisons

Soviet Army tactics had previously been thought to be characteristically rigid and stereotyped. This judgment proved to be in gross error at Nomonhan, where the Russians displayed tenacity and flexibility in planning and in the adoption of new tactics. Although endangered on various occasions, the Soviets succeeded in defending their bridgehead on the right bank of the Halha River for over four long months. Such a feat demonstrates the Russian will to resist at

any cost and the national characteristic of exerting all-out efforts to achieve predetermined objectives.

The great merit of the Soviet Army was its ability to change tactics on the spur of the moment, to cope with Japanese counter-measures. The Japanese, on the other hand, clung to the tactical principles set forth in the "Red Books."<sup>12</sup> Steadfastness of purpose was lacking when the situation demanded concentration of combat strength against one objective. The Japanese were instead imbued with conventional ideas of envelopment and annihilation, which merely looked good; or they assaulted enemy positions without carrying out intensive attack preparations. Such approaches were bound to expose numerous tactical weaknesses.

The Soviet forces attached appalling importance to military equipment. They actually limited their officers' and men's provisions to black bread and rock salt, in order to make room for the transportation of ammunition, fuel, etc. This demonstrates the extent to which the Soviet Union will go in executing its policies--a distinguishing feature unheard of in other armies.

For decisive combat the Soviet Army relied primarily upon tanks and heavy artillery. In sharp contrast, Japanese tactics emphasized the old infantry charge with bayonets, a ridiculous anachronism in 1939.

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12. A series of Japanese Army red-bound training manuals devoted to anti-Soviet tactics of warfare; prepared between 1933-35. - Ed.

We came to have a better knowledge of the real capabilities of the Red Army [writes Col. Inada], particularly of the largeness of its scale of operations and the value of its mechanized forces. Furthermore, we learned that the tactics and weapons of the Soviet Army were being rapidly improved and were utterly beyond comparison with those of the Japanese forces, which usually adhered to convention.

We even supposed that, when the freezing season set in, the battles at Nomonhan would not develop into full-scale hostilities. Such a view was far too optimistic, in view of the Soviet tactics which were to be employed during the Russo-German War.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

...The Russians' losses were heavy at Nomonhan. I [Col. Sumi] once saw a Soviet lieutenant commit suicide with a pistol when he was about to be captured. The Soviet soldiers were known for their toughness, going about lightly clad even in freezing weather. Although the Kwantung Army had been considered to be the cream of the whole Japanese Army, it bore no comparison with the Soviet Army. The Soviet soldier looks dull and slow, but he can be stubborn when pressing forward.<sup>14</sup>

Lt. Gen. Waichiro Sonobe, the Commander of the Kwantung Army's elite 7th Division, wrote the following critique at the time of the  
15  
Nomonhan Incident:

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13. Inada, loc. cit., Feb 56, p. 36. - Ed.

14. Sumi, loc. cit., 7 Aug 55, p. 15. - Ed.

15. Confidential personal letter addressed to Col. Shinichiro Sumi; no date; quoted at ibid., p. 14. - Ed.



1. The Japanese Command commenced operations without any preconceived plans. (Gen. Sonobe acutely felt the lack of operational planning).

2. The enemy was near his bases, while we were far from ours. Soviet preparations were complete; ours appeared quite inadequate.

3. We were practically unarmed, while the foe was well equipped.

4. Although enemy forces were strong at Nomonhan, the theater was considered to be of secondary importance, and the Japanese Command underestimated the enemy and the ferocity of the Incident.

### Conflicting Philosophies

According to Japanese military doctrine, the mind triumphs over matter. "Human-bullet" charges were fundamental offensive tactics. From a study of military history, the Japanese had seen that frontal assaults rarely succeeded in the period from 1904 to date. Japanese victories had always been effected primarily by tactics involving envelopment, maneuver, night attacks, and surprise, quite apart from considerations of morale. Nevertheless, the failure of the Japanese offensives at Nomonhan, west of the Halha and south of the Holsten, should have signalled intensive introspection concerning tactical doctrine. "Human bullets" had proved powerless in the face of modern technology and belts of fire.

The effects of the Japanese doctrinal outlook were felt in the field of weapons design. The Russians, for example, steadily improved their weapons in the light of combat lessons, but the Japanese

devoted far more stress to night combat and "moral tactics."

An example of the Japanese philosophy of warfare occurred in late August, when a conference was held to devise countermeasures against the imminent Soviet offensive. Certain officers suggested that the 23d Division should withdraw to the vicinity of Chiangchun-miao, in order to wage flexible operations. The recommendations were rejected primarily because of "no-withdrawal" pride, and emotional rather than objective thinking. Col. Sumi states:

The Kwantung Army made the serious mistake of thinking that victory could be obtained simply by fighting with the 'Japanese spirit.' The phrase 'offensive based upon material superiority' was later frequently used during the Pacific War. The Soviet Army took advantage of such material superiority at Nomonhan, only two years prior to the Pacific War.

Many Japanese military observers have concluded that the stress laid by their Army upon moral attributes and psychological factors derived not only from inherent national characteristics but also from the overwhelming and inevitable consequences of inferiority in natural resources.

#### Frontages

On the ground, the battles raged along a frontage of 60-70 kilometers and a depth of about 20 kilometers east of the Halha River.

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16. Estimate of Gen. Ogisu, Sixth Army Commander; DMTFE, Transcript, 27 May 47, pp. 23,051-52. - Ed.

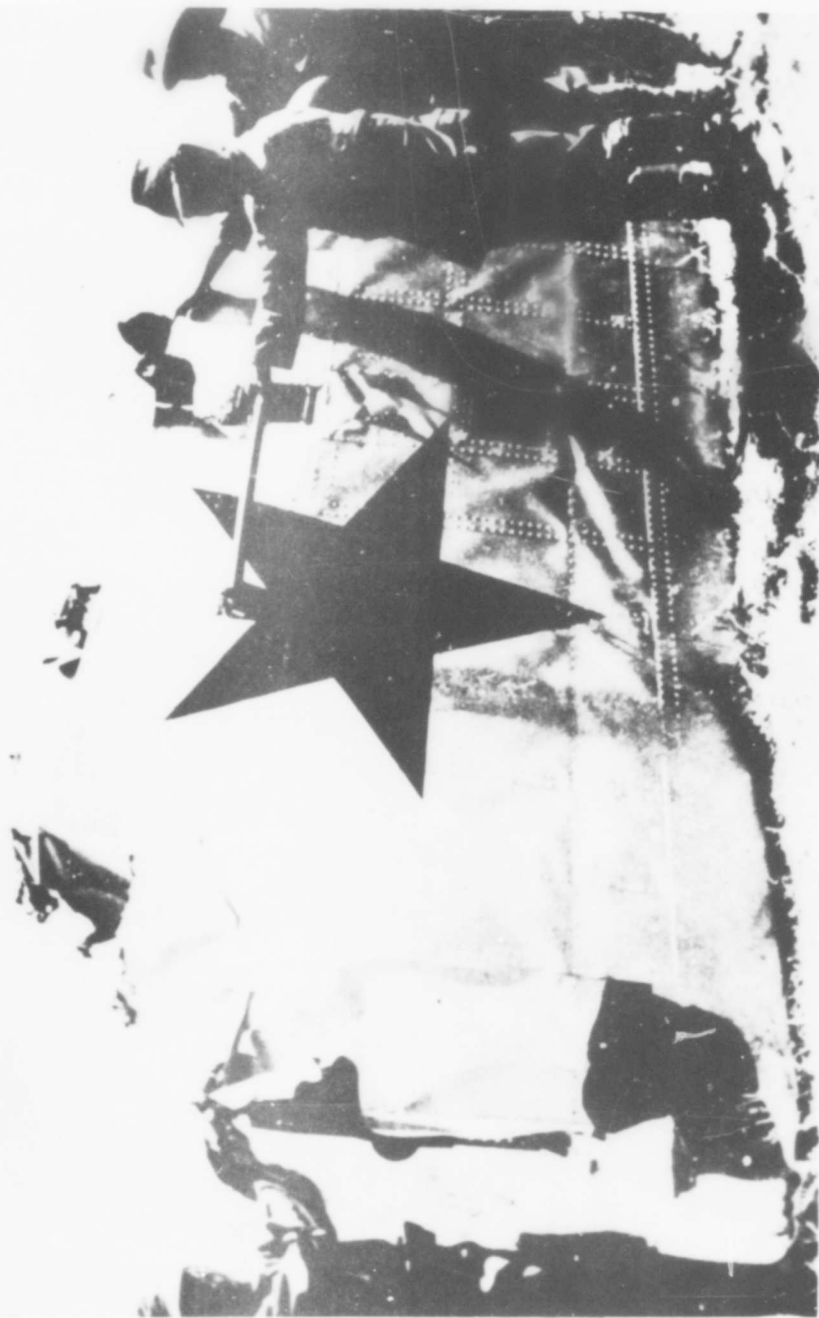
The 23d Division (reinforced by one regiment from the 7th Division) had the mission of holding a 40-kilometer front. The main and the secondary defensive fronts covered 16 and 24 kilometers, respectively, while flank security sectors covered an additional 60 kilometers. Defensive positions thus became keys to the whole system, with intervals of 2-10 kilometers between individual strong points defended by 1-3 infantry battalions.

#### Ground Offensive Operations

Enemy infantry originally launched assaults under artillery cover, the same as did the Japanese. The Soviet foot soldiers ran into strong resistance, however, and were destroyed in front of the Japanese positions. When the Russians realized the weakness of these actions, they immediately revised their tactics, using armor and flame-throwing tanks to lead attacks and to overrun Japanese defenses, while infantrymen followed immediately to the rear.

The Japanese forces which took the offensive early in July were inferior in strength to the foe; although the left bank of the Halha River could not be held, deadly blows were inflicted upon several enemy tank brigades. The regrouping of those brigades consumed considerable time, and the dispatch of replacements caused a miscarriage in the operational preparations of the enemy. Despite his superiority in strength, the enemy showed little imagination in the conduct of operations but merely repeated wasteful frontal assaults,

PHOTOGRAPH NO. 7



WING OF SOVIET MEDIUM BOMBER SHOT DOWN BY AA FIRE;  
NOMONHAN AREA, AUG 39. PHOTO SHIMBUN

as a result of the first Japanese offensive.

In no circumstances did the Soviet Army appear on the front line. Instead, Outer Mongolian troops were used, and the Russians urged them on from inside their tanks.<sup>17</sup>

Young officers or political commissars usually led the Soviets' infantry charges, waving a red flag. When these individuals were shot down, the Soviet troops usually fled in disorganized retreat. (See Appendix F).

Japanese forces mounted their offensives after about an eight-hour artillery preparation intended to neutralize enemy gun batteries. The attacks ground to a halt within two or three hours.

On the other hand, Soviet assault tactics were as follows:

X-Day -2: Bombing attacks vs. Japanese positions;  
X-Day -1: Artillery preparation;  
X-Day : Commencement of offensive.

Despite such intensive preparations, however, the enemy failed to inflict severe losses upon the Japanese positions. The Soviets thereupon sought to wear down the defenders' strength by successive night attacks employing one infantry division. The Japanese believed that the enemy suffered far heavier casualties than did they, although it had to be admitted that the Russian "human sea" tactics facilitated the enemy's main offensive effort, by forcing the Japanese to commit all reserves in order to replace front-line casualties.

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17. Sumi, loc. cit. - Ed.

On the whole, the collapse of Japanese positions went through the following stages:

1. Defensive positions, constructed in soft earth, collapsed under enemy bombardment.
2. Ammunition ran short, in the face of repeated enemy assaults. (Considerable quantities of ammunition were buried under the bombardment).
3. The foe sought to wipe out every antitank gun.
4. Moving up, enemy infantry gradually approached the close-quarter antitank defense zone; hand grenade combat ensued on both sides.
5. Enemy armor occupied the Japanese positions only after all defensive strength had been destroyed.

If the enemy had co-ordinated his air power, armor, artillery, and infantry operations better, he could have achieved success much sooner. Even with far superior strength, it took the Soviets several days to overrun a Japanese position. Russian offensives were mounted in methodical fashion; their assaults in late August, for example, were a typical double envelopment intended to trap the Japanese on Ulyn Heights. The pace of the offensive was so steady and slow, however, that the defenders were able to pull out their main forces from the endangered heights and shift them south of the Holsten, where they in turn threatened the Soviet right flank.

If the enemy had coordinated his air power, armor, artillery, and infantry operations better, and manifested less caution and more initiative in execution, he could have achieved success much sooner. Even so, the enemy displayed greater skill in ground-team operations than did the Japanese.

### Artillery Operations

The Soviets at first directed their main artillery effort against Japanese infantry positions. Thereafter the enemy gradually shifted the emphasis of his concentrations to the detection and destruction of Japanese gun batteries, often using tanks as decoys.

Heavy-caliber, long-range artillery is extremely valuable in operations on great flatland terrain. In the Nomonhan region, meteorology poses no problem in summer, since the humidity is low and the air is clear. With high-power field glasses, operational visibility extends to 30,000-40,000 meters. Where terrain does not obstruct, it is possible to see for 100,000 meters, with 12-power binoculars. The clarity of the air often plays tricks upon fire-control observers.

Without the help of spotter aircraft, ground observers can function at ranges of 30,000-40,000 meters, if not obstructed, as mentioned above. During the combat along the Halha River, the Soviet Army used Rheinmetall 15-cm. artillery with a maximum range of 25,000 and an effective range of 20,000 meters. Comparable Japanese artillery (Model 89, 15-cm. gun) had a maximum range of 18,100 meters, and usually fired at a range of 15,000-17,000 meters.

The Japanese were constantly harassed by the Russians' 10-cm. and 15-cm. artillery, firing at longer ranges. In particular, Soviet gunners took advantage of a hollow on the right bank of the Halha River to emplace field guns which were screened from Japanese counterfire by the terrain. Besides these especially effective field guns, the Soviets took advantage of the fact that their 15-cm. pieces were beyond the effective range of Japanese artillery. The comparatively excellent Russian guns were well co-ordinated with topography, and the Japanese were obliged to exert great efforts to secure cover and concealment. As soon as the enemy detected a target within range, he immediately took it under fire. Alternative and dummy battery sites proved extremely valuable.

Soviet artillery has earlier been termed "comparatively excellent," but the Japanese were more impressed by the enemy's quantitative rather than qualitative superiority, for the Russians expended far more ammunition than did they. After the Japanese offensive in late July, all Japanese artillery units were strictly rationed in daily firing; e.g., 2-3 rounds per day per medium gun. In retrospect, Japanese observers feel that the underestimation of quantity may have been the greatest weakness of their Army and, in turn, underlay their defeat in World War II. Behind this outlook, however, was not so much a lack of recognition as a shortage of material resources, it is contended.

As far as individual Japanese guns were concerned, the Model 90



75-mm. field gun proved its worth at Nomonhan. This particular weapon (which had the longest range of all standard Japanese light field pieces and was equipped with a muzzle recoil brake) had been somewhat in the discard prior to 1939. At Nomonhan, however, the Model 90 performed splendidly in antitank, anti-artillery, and infantry support roles. If the Kwantung Army had possessed even more of this type of gun, the combat situation might have progressed far more favorably for the Japanese.

One of the Japanese observations concerning Soviet artillery at Nomonhan was the prevalence of dud shells. Examination of these projectiles indicated crude external design characteristics and suggested amateurism in manufacture.

In so far as artillery is concerned, the Japanese felt that combat on flatlands is comparable to warfare at sea, and that it would have been far better if they had possessed long-range guns of heavier caliber than the enemy.

#### Antitank Tactics

At the outset of the ground fighting in May, Soviet armor fell easy prey to flaming "Molotov cocktails" improvised from soft-drink or beer bottles. A month later, however, the enemy had equipped his tanks with Diesel-burning engines, or covered vulnerable parts with steel netting. Now that the Russian tanks could not be so easily ignited, the Japanese were at a loss to devise effective antitank

measures.

Japanese forces which penetrated deeply into enemy positions in early July were immobilized by the enemy's piano wire obstacles and were raked by antitank gun crossfire. But when over 100 Soviet tanks repeatedly attacked Japanese flank positions in waves, they were repulsed just before they could penetrate the defenses, by the few AT guns and by close-quarter attack.

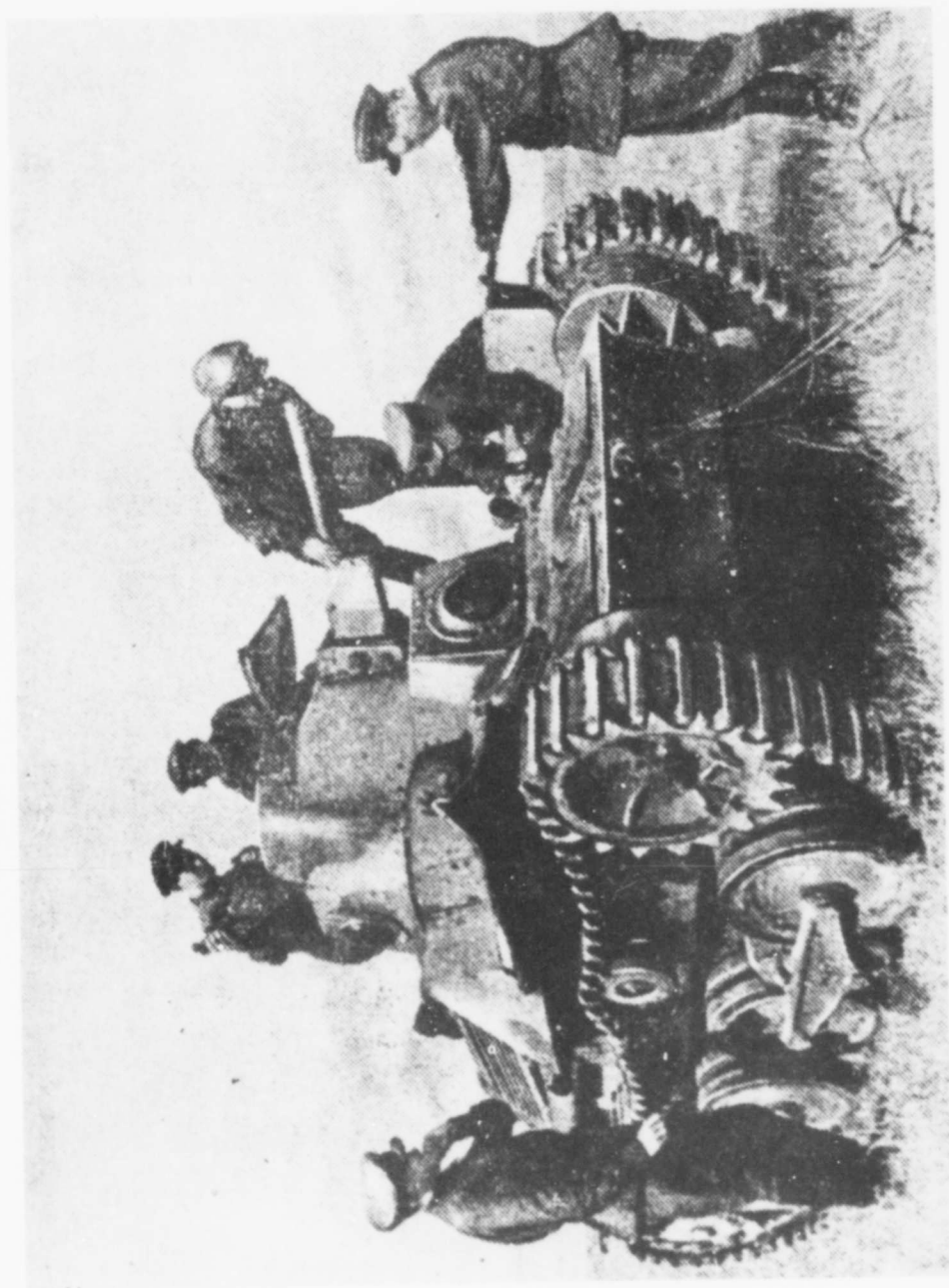
### Mobile Operations

In flatland terrain like the Nomonhan area, the bulk of ground force strength should consist of armored and mechanized units. The Japanese offensive across the Halha eventually failed despite the initial surprise crossing, largely because all troops had to move on foot; heavy vehicles including tanks could not get across the river. The Japanese Army possessed bridging equipment suitable for armor, but this materiel was in the homeland, not in Manchuria. If the Japanese assault forces could have used armor and trucks, they could have reached the Soviet artillery and infantry positions before Russian aircraft detected the bridge at dawn. A surprise attack could have routed the enemy, and the destruction of his successive reinforcements could then have been effected. For soldiers to move

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18. For details, see "Battle Actions, 26th Inf Regt," Chapter 7; and Appendix F. - Ed.

PHOTOGRAPH NO. 8



SOVIET SOLDIERS EXAMINE JAPANESE LIGHT TANK KNOCKED OUT AT NOMONHAN, 3 JUL 39.

across the steppes on foot is like crossing the Pacific in a row-boat.

Horses are not needed in the Nomonhan region; they are useful only where trucks and tractors cannot go. In fact, horses are a nuisance on the flatlands, since motor vehicles can operate everywhere and at full speed. In hauling capacity and speed, horses bear no comparison with motor vehicles. The animals, moreover, drink precious water and consume large amounts of feed even when they are not in use, whereas vehicles do not consume fuel when idle.

Compared to the Japanese, the Soviet Army appears to have ascribed more importance to armored fire power than to mobility. Tanks were often dug into the dunes as immobile pillboxes exploiting guns and protection but not maneuver.

### Night and Surprise

Surprise is critical during attacks on the flatlands. During the initial stages of the Nomonhan Incident, Japanese reconnaissance units were able to throw superior enemy forces into confusion and to inflict heavy losses by approaching hostile positions under cover of darkness and by effecting a breakthrough. Intense artillery fire pinned down the Japanese on the shores of the Halha, however, and severe losses were sustained, since the surprise effect could not be exploited.

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The Japanese offensive at the beginning of July also failed to exploit early successes. Superiority in armor and mobility, long-range artillery, and air power are imperative for achieving success in one fell swoop.

Dispersion is imperative on the plains in daylight; concentration at night. Japanese units frequently destroyed Soviet artillery and tanks by infiltrating enemy positions under cover of darkness.

Throughout the Incident neither side could obtain complete success by surprise attack. For example, if the Soviets, during their counteroffensive against the river-crossing force, could have committed one additional tank brigade, all Japanese units on the left bank of the Halha might have been annihilated.

At night, Soviet armor maintained a strict alert. To ward off possible Japanese raids, the enemy tanks usually retreated to a rear zone of safety, where they covered each other in circular formation. Late in August, when the Incident was drawing to a close, enemy armor even operated at night, with single tanks penetrating the Japanese heavy gun positions and overrunning them.

#### Psychological Warfare

Battlefield psychological warfare was cleverly conducted by the Soviets. When the combat situation took a turn unfavorable for the Japanese during the closing days of the Nomonhan Incident,

the Russians employed powerful front-line loudspeakers around the clock, in an attempt to demoralize the Japanese troops by broadcasting fluently in their own language (using prisoners-of-war).<sup>19</sup> Assertions that hostilities were not going in favor of the Japanese seriously affected the morale of poorly trained new conscripts. In the stillness of night, when the moon shone upon the corpses of comrades heaped upon the ground in no man's land, the bravest of officers and men could not fail to be depressed by the enemy's clever battlefield propaganda.

In fluent Japanese, the enemy appealed to Japanese officers and men alike to surrender. (In the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, the Russians used large megaphones for the same purpose [as the loudspeakers]). This had a disturbing effect. While it was unlikely that Japanese soldiers would surrender to the Soviets, Japanese officers feared that the appeals, which were kept up night and day, might weaken the fighting spirit of the men.

The Intelligence Service Subcommittee of the Nomonhan Incident Research Committee [later] undertook a study of this battlefield propaganda technique. It concluded that the fighting spirit of troops in the front lines can be weakened by appeals to surrender, especially when the tactical situation is deadlocked or when tactical supremacy is achieved.<sup>20</sup>

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19. Other sources state that the Russians used Koreans to broadcast in Japanese. - Ed.

20. Data provided by then-Maj. Etsuo Kotani, a member of the Army General Staff's Russian Intelligence Section at the time of Nomonhan; based upon Japanese Studies on Manchuria, Vol. X, Japanese Intelligence Planning Against the U.S.S.R., p. 91. - Ed.

### Logistics

The locale of the fighting at Nomonhan occurred 200 kilometers from the nearest Japanese supply bases, and 700 kilometers from the nearest Soviet logistical installations. At the peak of the combat, the Japanese used about 1,800 trucks; i.e., 320 truck loads per day. To provide the same quantities of materiel, the Russians needed about 12,000 trucks, but they actually used more than 20,000, brought from the Amur and Maritime provinces, as well as from European Russia. Even more trucks were required, however, and the Soviet troops consequently had to march on foot; to mass one division took them about one month.

The Japanese were amazed at the thoroughness with which the Russians dispersed thousands of motor vehicles throughout vast stretches of grassy steppe. When attacking the Soviets from the air or with artillery, great difficulties were encountered in detecting profitable targets; in no case were clusters of vehicles or guns observed. Enemy camouflage was admirably complete. Exposed troops were seldom seen on the flatlands.

Japanese LOC motor transport companies were deployed in columns several hundred meters long, with intervals of dozens of meters between individual vehicles (to the front, rear, and side). Losses to enemy fighter attacks were thus minimized.

Traffic regulations must be strictly observed during large-scale operations on great flatlands like the Nomonhan vicinity,

involving thousands of vehicles. These measures were incomplete during the Nomonhan Incident, on the part of the Japanese. At the worst, over two-thirds of the total number of vehicles piled up because of failure to maintain intervals and speed regulations.

Motor fuel was dispersed on the flatlands around Nomonhan at intervals of several dozen meters per 20-drum dump (sufficient fuel for one truck).

#### Water Supply, Provisions, and Sanitation

Operations in steppe regions are controlled by water. Units operating away from water sources must possess well-drilling units.

During the fighting around Nomonhan, both sides lacked water and sought to include good sources of water supply within their operational zones. The Soviets stubbornly clung to their bridgehead on the right bank of the Halha River and fully utilized that waterway as a source of water, one of their main concerns. The Japanese established positions around the Holsten, using the river for its water, but could use the Halha only during the offensive to the west bank, early in July.

Water played an important role many times during the fighting. When, for example, Japanese assault troops were preparing to cross the Halha, they had to bivouack in a waterless region for several days, before moving up. When they finally reached the Halha, officers and men completely forgot to cross the bridge and instead



gulped down the equivalent of several days' water rations from the river.

The Japanese organized a special unit to maintain water supplies, including the purification, transportation, and issue of water. Units remote from sources of water supply require drinking water even more than food. During the last phases of the fighting at Nomonhan, Japanese soldiers could be seen carrying water in every conceivable container. Manchukuoan troops in areas far from water supply points even drank muddy water found in ruts.

The inadequate Japanese supply system was a good example of our unorganized operation. I [Col. Sumi] thought that at least one meal of rice should be available to the troops every day, and ordered a 2d Lt. to convey rice balls to the men at the front. The lieutenant went to the rear and rounded up medical corps personnel to prepare salted rice balls, after boiling the rice in steel drums which had been cut in half. He must have been making the rice balls too, for his hands became red and swollen like baseball gloves.

Water and rice balls packed in pouches were brought up to the front. Most of the lakes in the Nomonhan area are saline, but the officers and men eagerly drank the throat-searing water. Water, in fact, was the most precious thing at Nomonhan. I drank water brought to me in a bottle filled from the Halha River.<sup>21</sup>

Extreme drops in temperature during the summer nights caused body chills and gastric upsets. Mosquitoes were another vexing problem. (See Appendix F).

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21. Sumi, loc. cit. - Ed.

Air Operations

Air power must be exercised actively to acquire command of the skies over steppe country. Forests and villages are almost entirely absent, and troops or supplies cannot be concealed from the air. Conversely, air observation and attack are easily effected against all ground targets. Abandoning all hope of securing cover, ground troops can only hope to limit their losses under air attack. The sole precautionary measures consist of dispersion or man-made shelters for soldiers; dispersion and camouflage for material.

During the first month of the Incident, enemy fighters were almost always defeated in air combat with the Japanese.<sup>23</sup> Soon afterwards, however, the Soviets adopted "three-layer" tactics. The enemy (who had previously met the Japanese fighters at their same altitude) now switched to tactics involving three "layers" of flight; i.e., by dividing strength into formations for low, medium, and high-altitude attack. The change in tactics harassed the Japanese much more than before.

Japanese air fields at Hailar were too far away from the fighting front at Nomonhan to be used as staging bases. Both the Russians

22. The subject of air force and antiaircraft operations at Nomonhan is treated comprehensively in Vol. VII of the Japanese Studies on Manchuria. - Ed.

23. Col. Minoru Miyashi, Air Operations Officer at Kwantung Army Headquarters, states that no Japanese aircraft were lost during Phase I of the Nomonhan Incident, while the Soviets lost 62 planes. - Ed.

and the Japanese set up air bases very near the combat zones, since the topography of the flatlands facilitates the establishment of air strips everywhere. Aircraft can evacuate the seriously wounded from behind the battle lines.

The Japanese felt that the Soviet Air Force manifested no great skill in supporting ground operations. Russian bombers flew only in level flight, at altitudes of 3,000-4,000 meters; their raids scored very poorly in general. The Japanese frequently could not even ascertain the targets of the Soviet bombers.

#### Air Reconnaissance

When the Nomonhan Incident broke out, enemy ground forces were known to be concentrated near Bain Tumen, but their original stations could not be determined. Not until two or three months after the commencement of the Incident were the enemy's detraining points and routes of movement ascertained through long-range reconnaissance.

Timely intelligence concerning enemy movements in the Arshaan area was impossible because of the priority assigned to operations near Nomonhan. Front-line aerial reconnaissance missions were effectively conducted, but it was keenly felt that considerable efforts had to be exerted in order to secure vital strategic reconnaissance data, especially when the enemy took unexpected routes of advance.

In the case of the Soviet Army's two large-scale offensives,

early reconnaissance of concentrations and of attack preparations proved impossible because bad weather hampered aerial observation missions.

Balloons proved a failure in artillery spotting missions, since enemy fighters easily shot them down. Clear-cut aerial dominance is a prerequisite to the effective use of defenseless balloons.

#### Intelligence and Security Functions

Reliable intelligence reports were promptly collected by Kwantung Army organs, based upon cabled messages, espionage agents working in enemy territory, and radio intelligence. Air reconnaissance was overly depended upon, however, and timely estimates of enemy strength, dispositions, and scale of operations could not be undertaken. Swift countermeasures to cope with changing combat situations therefore proved impossible—a grave weakness on the part of the Japanese.<sup>24</sup>

Hostile natives were a source of danger around Nomonhan. For example, enemy fighters appeared over the battlefield to intercept Japanese bombers when they took off. Investigations disclosed that

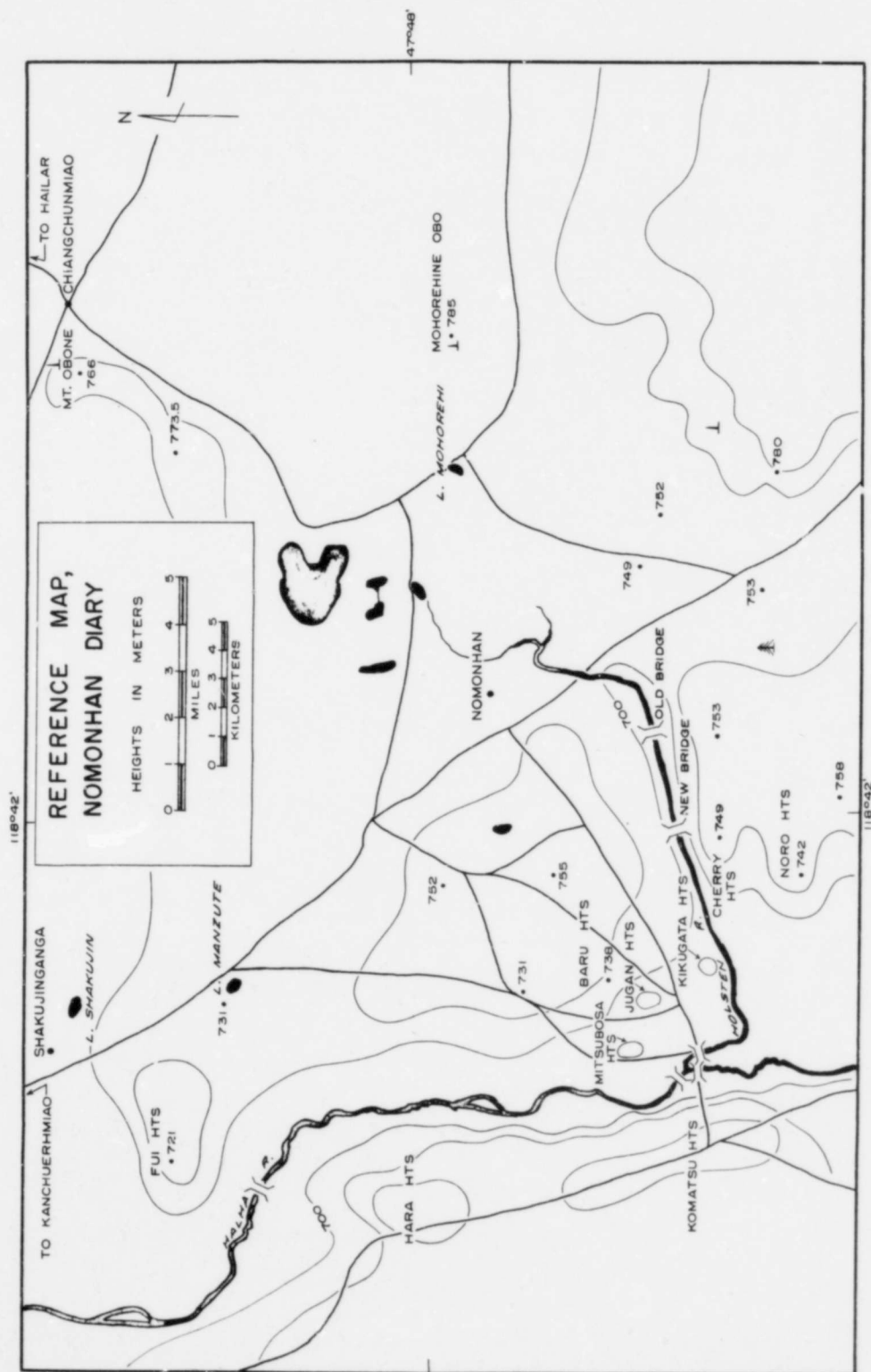
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24. For details concerning the findings of the Special Intelligence Service Subcommittee of the Nomonhan Incident Research Committee (established in Dec 39), see Vol. X, Japanese Studies on Manchuria, Japanese Intelligence Planning Against the U.S.S.R., pp. 53-55. - Ed.

native shepherds had concealed themselves near Japanese air strips and had contacted the enemy by radio. Col. Sumi adds:

Soviet intelligence appeared to be superior to ours, even during battle. Once, when 23d Division Commander Komatsubara had alighted from his sedan, the Russians opened up with artillery against this black car. Immediately after they had destroyed the sedan, the Soviet news agency, Tass, reported the death of Gen. Komatsubara, although there had been no battlefield rumors of his death, and the Soviet Union possessed no evidence to confirm the claim. It later became known that the Soviets made the statement because they knew, through spies, that Gen. Komatsubara's sedan was black.

# MAP NO. 27



Appendix F  
NOMONHAN DIARY\*

Preface

The recent vicissitudes of European nations, and the remarkable results obtained through the so-called Blitzkrieg operations of the Nazi German forces, have made me feel even more keenly the value of lessons learned from the Nomonhan Incident. We clearly came to know the physical stamina of Soviet troops and the level of their fighting spirit and combat technique. However, this did not in the slightest degree shake our conviction of gaining victory in any war with the Soviet forces. It must be admitted, though, that we were slightly inferior to the enemy in over-all fighting strength, especially in the amount of equipment. That is why we failed at the last moment to deal a fatal, finishing blow to the enemy. All in all, I believe that the lessons we learned from the Nomonhan Incident are too valuable to consign to oblivion. (See Map No. 27, throughout).

27 Jun 39

Dawn comes early on the Mongolian plains. By 0300 hours the sky over the grasslands of Hulun Buir is already light with the

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\* Edited version of extracts from book entitled Noro Kochi (Noro Heights), by Capt. Sakae Kusaba, battery commander of the 23d Artillery Regiment. The heavily censored first edition appeared in February 1941. - Ed.

morning sun. The Kusaba Unit\* left Hailar at 0400 hours on 22 June and arrived four kilometers east of Chiangchunmiao at 2000 hours on 26 June. At 0400 hours the next day, orders were received ordering the Kusaba Unit to detach itself from the Saki Unit and advance 12 kilometers to occupy the Obone Mountains in order to protect the main unit, which was concentrating in the vicinity, against enemy tank attacks.

There are no trees on the broad expanse of the grassy plains. Overhead, no clouds shield us from the blistering sun. The Obone Mountains themselves are nothing but sand dunes which rise suddenly from the plains to a height of 30 meters.

Manchukuoan Army units with which we were to work consisted of a regiment commanded by Col. Sotonoki, and two mountain artillery guns commanded by Capt. Morita. In addition, one infantry platoon (under Lt. Ariyoshi) and two AT guns (under Sgt. Miyata) were assigned to my battery.

Apart from scattered clumps of willows four or five feet high, the terrain is desert-like.

About 40 enemy tanks could be seen reconnoitering 8,000-10,000 meters in front. These tanks usually disappeared during the day, only to reappear and assemble at twilight.

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\* Where identifiable, unit and detachment designations are presented in the glossary at the end of the present appendix. In Japanese practice, names were often used instead of numbers, for purposes of military secrecy. - Ed.



We obtained shelter by digging deeply into the sandy soil and covering the top with canvas. Scrub willow served as camouflage.

When we ran out of water, we learned that a milky sort of water could be obtained by digging about one meter into the ground at the foot of willow trees growing in moist depressions.

#### 28 Jun

Construction of shelters for observation posts, camouflaging of batteries, and expansion of communication trenches were pushed. The sky became overcast at about 1000 hours; shortly after 1100 hours it began to rain. Work was stopped and, except for guards, everyone took shelter. The rain was coming down in torrents, but near Nomonhan, far off on the Hulun Buir Plain, the sky was bright with the glittering sunlight of summer.

At 1530 hours, a wireless message was received to the effect that the Kusaba Unit was to be detached from the Ise Unit and placed under the direct command of the Kobayashi Detachment.

Suddenly, at 1600 hours, nearly 40 enemy tanks were seen raising dust at a point about 10,000 meters in front of our position. They peeped above the crest line every now and then but soon disappeared from sight. The construction of positions continued.

At 1720 hours, a report from cavalry patrols of the Manchukuoan Army informed us that enemy tank and armored car units were again beginning to operate. It appeared that the time for combat was at

last approaching.

Meanwhile, the Manchukuoan Army reported that an Outer Mongolian cavalry soldier had been captured. Clad in the Outer Mongolian Army uniform, this young prisoner revealed that he had been forcibly conscripted and taken away from the Kulun [Ulan Bator] District about 10 days before.

#### 29 Jun

Weather -- fine; sunlight -- blinding.

Enemy tank and armored car units to the front seem to have been greatly reinforced.

#### 30 Jun

At 1400 hours, orders were received from the Kobayashi Unit ordering the Kusaba Unit to complete preparations for departure.

There were signs of commotion along the enemy front. It seemed that the main body of the friendly force was intending to seize and crush the invading enemy in the vicinity of the confluence of the Halha and Holsten Rivers, by turning the right rear flank of the enemy.

Tomorrow, all of the friendly force will begin a general attack. Our detachment is to move up to Hill No. 733.5 [793.5?], six kilometers south of the Obone Mountains, by 0530 hours, and then advance along the defile lying to the north. The mission assigned to us was to cover the left flank of the main body of the friendly

force which will be moving up toward the Halha River.

1 Jul

Weather -- fine as usual.

Leaving our positions in the Obone Mountains at 0430 hours, our detachment crossed the sand-dune plain southward and arrived at Hill No. 733.5 [793.5?] at 0530 hours. Far away on the grassy steppes to the north, the main body of the friendly force could be seen marching in a long line westward toward the Halha River. In the distance we also saw friendly transport units rounding the northern foot of the Obone Mountains. At 0615 hours, after seeing the whole friendly force pass before us, our detachment withdrew from Hill No. 733.5 [793.5?] and headed west to catch up with the main body. 1st Lt. Takahashi's platoon was ordered to guard the left flank.

We overtook the main body at 0800 hours and then proceeded toward Shakujinganga, the forward objective for the day. By 1500 hours, we had marched some 30 kilometers. When we were passing a point about three kilometers east of the blue lake of Shakujinganga, a great cloud of dust suddenly rose in the distance. Approximately 6,000 meters off, three enemy tanks could be seen advancing toward us. We immediately concentrated our fire upon them. The enemy tanks moved hither and thither for a while and then began to retreat at full speed.

Immediately thereafter the first shell from the enemy artillery

exploded close to our position, followed by heavy concentrated fire from the heights overlooking Shakujinganga. About eight enemy guns (15-cm. howitzers and field guns) were firing on us with considerable accuracy. By 1525 hours, however, our fire silenced the enemy artillery and observation posts. At 1617 hours, approximately 300 enemy troops (who were about to go over to the offensive from the crest line on the left flank) were repulsed. Under our heavy fire, the enemy infantry began to retreat in great confusion. In the meantime, the main body of the friendly force began advancing toward Shakujinganga. By 1655 hours, the enemy was in full retreat. This night our detachment was attached to the Kobayashi Unit, and we headed for Fui Heights.

## 2 Jul

With the fall of Shakujinganga, the enemy on our right flank (on the Amukulang front) began retreating in the night.

At 0430 hours our detachment completed the occupation of Fui Heights. We were to stay there until evening. Before breakfast, a roar of guns suddenly began to be heard from the enemy's hill positions.

The target seemed to be the Sakai Unit, which was concentrating on the southern side of Fui Heights. At 1030 hours, orders were received from the Sakai Unit ordering our detachment to neutralize enemy artillery on the river bank, at a distance of about 6,000

meters. Our fire was highly effective, but the enemy changed his positions, and again began firing on the Sakai Unit.

At 2100 hours, our detachment was ordered to cross a depression and penetrate deep into the enemy position. It was reported that the enemy was constructing strong hill positions.

The sky was overcast; a soft drizzling rain was falling.

At 2130 hours, we left our positions and headed for the depression under cover of darkness. It was becoming depressingly cold.

### 3 Jul

At 2130 hours last night, we started in the drizzling rain for the crossing point in the depression. The rain increased and the cold became more intense. We marched on and on across the vast plain. Soon we came in sight of the depression where we slaked our thirst with dirty, stagnant water.

At 0400 hours we arrived at the crossing point which commands a close view of the hill objective. Battery positions were selected and preparations were made for firing in support of the advance of the infantry. Due to the delay in road construction by the engineers, we had to suspend our advance, but the infantry crossed the wet depression at dawn and began to march up the steep slopes of the hill.

Enemy troops were sighted moving southward about two kilometers from the hill. Both the enemy and our infantry were unaware of each

other at first, but a battle commenced soon after the forward elements of our infantry reached the crest line of the hill.

Suddenly, enemy tanks appeared amidst cannon smoke and rushed into the columns of our infantry. Our casualties seemed to amount to a considerable number.

Meanwhile, a formation of 25 of our light bombers, escorted by several scores of fighters, appeared overhead and flew southward at an altitude of 3,000 meters to bomb the enemy in the river confluence region. Soon, columns of smoke were observed rising from the enemy artillery positions, and the guns were silenced. Overhead, several fighters engaged in aerial combat.

At last the road construction work was completed at 0900 hours, and we crossed the depression to the rear of the Sakai Unit, about five hours behind schedule. We hurried to the hill, but when we arrived there the battle was already over.

We continued our rapid advance. According to a staff officer of the Unit Headquarters, in the previous action the Harada Unit belonging to the Sakai Unit had been suddenly attacked by enemy tanks, but had rallied quickly and carried out a vigorous counter-attack. The unit killed an enemy tank brigade commander and captured his automobile, in which many important documents were discovered.

While advancing in deployed formation, we were attacked by nine enemy SB planes flying at an altitude of 5,000 meters, but no

damage was suffered by the Headquarters or our unit.

Meanwhile, 2d Lt. Hyakutake, an observation officer of the Seld Unit, came running toward our unit. He shouted, "Fifty or sixty enemy tanks have appeared on the right front; the Kusaba Unit is to attack and force them back." The enemy tanks, in an attempt to trample us down in one swoop, were making a rush at an estimated speed of 45 to 50 kilometers per hour. The moment the first tank came within range, we opened fire. An unusual round of explosions dispelled our fear and anxiety. The first tank was knocked out and wrapped in flames. In an instant, another tank was hit by our artillery fire. The battle ended soon thereafter when the other tanks turned and fled. From this experience we learned the importance of quick action in antitank combat.

At 1110 hours we resumed our advance. About 20 minutes later, 20 enemy tanks were seen charging against the unit commander's vehicle, which had advanced ahead of us; it was a completely surprise attack. The enemy tanks were so near to the unit commander's vehicle that it was dangerous to open fire. A moment later, however, I ordered my men to "fire continuously at will." Luckily, the first enemy tank, which was about to overrun the unit commander's vehicle, was wrecked and wrapped in flames. The remaining enemy tanks turned to attack us, but they were checked by our fire. The crew of one of the slightly damaged tanks made an offer to surrender by waving a handkerchief. We waited for a while, but they would not get out

of their tank (which was equipped with a 45-mm. cannon and a machine gun). As there was the possibility of a sudden treacherous attack if we approached to accept the surrender, I ordered my men to destroy the tank.

A desperate battle still continued on the front line. There were many casualties on the part of our forces. At 1150 hours I dispatched the 3d Squad, commanded by 2d Lt. Tomiyoshi, to reinforce the Observation Team of the Seki Unit, which was under attack by enemy tanks. Upon receipt of a report that the Tomiyoshi Squad was enveloped by nine enemy tanks, the main body of our unit turned back at 1215 hours and hurried to the rescue. We destroyed seven enemy tanks.

At 1330 hours we arrived at a hill south of the crossing point and, in accordance with an order from the Seki Unit, we occupied positions about 200 meters behind the front line, on the left flank of the unit headquarters. Our mission was to defend the Headquarters and cooperate with the front-line troops. The air of Hulun Buir was so clear that we were able to see objects 30 kilometers away.

The battle was still raging on the hill. Afraid of our fierce artillery fire, enemy tanks resorted to tactics of firing from behind sand dunes. We succeeded in destroying one of them and repulsing the remainder. The number of enemy tanks destroyed by us since morning amounted to 26.



Meanwhile, the enemy increased his artillery fire against the left flank of the unit headquarters and the Kobayashi Unit. We exchanged fire with the heavy artillery hill position for about five hours until 2020 hours.

Due to the intensification of enemy tank and artillery attacks we were ordered to withdraw from the hill at 2200 hours. At the head of the entire force, we marched toward the crossing point under persistent artillery attacks. Tracer bullets and signal shots were followed by heavy showers of shells. After a difficult night march, at 0400 hours we were finally able to reach the steep slope which led to the crossing point.

According to the motor vehicle and engineer unit personnel who had remained behind, they had sustained losses from severe enemy air raids and artillery fire. The wreckage of enemy planes (I-16's and SB's) which had been shot down by our antiaircraft gunfire lay scattered.

#### 4 Jul

Camouflaging ourselves with branches of scrub willow, we advanced. Enemy artillery fire was severe. In front of the friendly infantry units, approximately 150 to 160 enemy tanks (in groups of 10 to 15) were seen moving. In addition, a vast number of infantrymen could be seen moving among the tanks. The enemy seemed to be planning an assault against us by relying upon his numerical

superiority.

Shortly afterwards, approximately 20 enemy planes appeared and strafed our position from an altitude of 60 meters. The only casualty in this attack, which ended at 1150 hours, was PFC Tazaki of the 3d Squad, who was wounded in the hip.

The enemy, who had detected our point of passage, stubbornly resisted. As was expected, soon thereafter enemy planes appeared one after another over Lake Buir. The planes, SB medium bombers, numbering about 16, flew towards us at an altitude of approximately 3,000 meters. Their target seemed to be our positions.

They dropped 50 to 60 bombs successively on our position; considerable damage was expected but, fortunately, our losses were only two horses killed. The air raid ended about 1250 hours. At 2000 hours, orders were received from the Seki Unit ordering our unit to withdraw to a hill on the Balshagar Plain in order to destroy the enemy west of Nomonhan.

#### 5 Jul

About 0330 hours we found Manzute Lake (southeast of Hill No. 731) in the dark. We rushed forward to slake our thirst, but to our dismay it was a saline lake. Such lakes are often found in the Hulun Buir Plain, which has considerable alkali waste areas.

Toward 0400 hours, a commotion arose among the friendly troops stationed 200 meters ahead of us, due to the appearance of friendly

tanks. It seemed that they were moving to our right flank area as a detachment of the Yasuoka Unit. The enemy confronting us had retreated to the left bank of the Halha River after the fighting on the 3d and 4th. The rest of the enemy was that near to the junction of the Halha and Holsten Rivers.

Our unit resumed the advance, and at 0400 hours occupied Hill No. 731, a desolate hill only five or six meters in height. On our left front the friendly tank unit was seen assembling. About 0810 hours, when we were preparing to bivouac, approximately ten enemy planes appeared through low-hanging clouds, searching for targets; but after the arrival of our fighter planes, they flew away at great speed toward the Halha River. Ever since the loss of 100 planes in our air raid on Tamsag on 27 June, enemy aircraft have been loath to fight our planes.

At about that time, the sky became darkened with clouds, and rain began to fall. We were all engaged in pitching tents, shivering from the chill of the morning wind and drenched with rain. At this time, there suddenly flashed upon us the idea of collecting rain water for drinking purposes by slackening the roofs of our tents.

At 0830 hours, 2d Lt. Hashimoto left to inspect positions with Unit Commander Seki. Several hours later he returned and reported that, contrary to reports, there was still a considerable number

of enemy troops in the vicinity. At 1330 hours Lt. Hashimoto again left for reconnaissance of the high ground. He returned several hours later, about 1700 hours, and reported having observed aerial combat over the depression on three occasions, and having seen three unidentified planes falling in flames. At 1730 hours Lt. Hashimoto again left on a reconnaissance mission in accordance with an order from the Seki Unit. He returned at 0200 hours, exhausted, and reported that the enemy was secretly strengthening his forces.

#### 6 Jul

It stopped raining about 0900 hours. The night raid scheduled to be launched by our infantry last night was postponed till this evening due to the rain. Our unit was ordered to advance to cooperate with the infantry. At about 1100 hours it was reported that the Tamata Tank Unit was under severe attack and fighting a desperate battle. The Imoto Unit was dispatched to reinforce it.

While we were advancing, we were attacked from the right flank by enemy artillery and from the air by about 80 enemy aircraft. Sgt. Sakamoto and Pvt. Kurishima were wounded.

Two enemy tanks rushed toward us, but both of them were destroyed by our first three rounds.

At about 1530 hours, four 15-cm. enemy howitzers were discovered firing with their shields exposed at a point about 1,400 meters to the right front. We fired and destroyed two of them.

At about 1740 hours, four enemy tanks rushed toward us. Two of them were destroyed by our heavy fire, and the remaining two retreated. By this time, the enemy learned that there was no infantry to support us. Deploying and utilizing the terrain, enemy infantrymen advanced toward us. Only after great difficulty did we finally succeed in driving them off. We lost two killed in this combat, and four or five were wounded.

#### 7 Jul

Last night we took a prisoner-of-war. After interrogation, he was sent to the rear with the dead and wounded.

Enemy action increased from afternoon. Apparently their main firepower consisted of 15-cm. howitzers. Enemy tactics today consisted of firing several rounds from one position and then immediately changing positions, never staying at one site for long.

Soviet infantrymen began advancing again toward our artillery position in an attempt to annihilate us. Jumping out of trenches and making good use of the terrain, they approached us, some with mounted Maxim machine guns. In spite of heavy losses, they continued to come. Only after losing twelve dead and six wounded, did the enemy withdraw. The time was 1900 hours.

#### 8 Jul

The weather was fine for the first time in many days. At 0600 hours the Seld Unit ordered us to move our position to Hill No. 751,

south of Hill No. 731 (which we had previously occupied on the 6th) in order to support the front-line infantry.

The front was relatively quiet today. We succeeded in silencing the enemy after destroying one field gun and one 15-cm. howitzer. Our only casualty was Pvt. Tanaka, who was slightly wounded.

At about 2400 hours we were told by telephone that the night raid launched by our infantry had been successful, and that elements of our infantry had already reached the Halha River.

#### 9 Jul

The dazzling sun was still beating down over the Balshagar Plain. We decided to set up a forward observation post at a point eight kilometers north of the junction of the Halha and Holsten Rivers in order to deal a "knockout blow" against the enemy forces. They had fled in disorder to Outer Mongolian territory as a result of the successful night assault carried out by our infantry units last night. About 0800 hours, an hour after the departure of an advance observation team, we left for the confluence of the two rivers. As we advanced, we passed the wrecks of enemy trucks, armored cars, and communications cars, all smashed to pieces or burned and destroyed by our gunfire. We also saw the bodies of several Soviet soldiers. To our surprise, there were also women's dresses, which reminded us of Soviet propaganda leaflets, found yesterday, advising Japanese soldiers to lay down their arms and go

back to their beloved families.

Suddenly we found ourselves under rifle fire from a few enemy snipers to the right front. Despite this sudden attack, we continued to advance slowly toward a plateau, where the advance observation team was believed to be located. Soon after arriving at the plateau, we discovered four hostile BT medium tanks moving slowly at a distance of approximately 300 meters to the right front, and a considerable force of enemy infantry units making combat preparations at a point only 100 meters away. It seemed that elements of enemy forces, despite their defeat last night, were still offering stubborn resistance in this area, and that therefore our observation post had advanced too far into enemy territory.

Four of the enemy tanks began rushing toward us, but two of them were hit by our artillery and set afire while the other two fled. We soon realized, however, that enemy forces of considerable strength were still operating behind us. A telephone call to rear echelons revealed that all of our infantry units had withdrawn after their successful night attack, and that we were really all alone in enemy territory, completely surrounded. The enemy appeared to be shifting to the offensive again, massing a large number of tanks and trucks, which were seen moving from Outer Mongolian territory toward the confluence of the two rivers.

Despite repeated telephone calls from the Headquarters of the

Ise Unit, urging us to pull back, we continued firing in order to maintain the present position, which was very convenient for observation; but we were finally ordered to return to our former position. We started to withdraw at 1230 hours. The enemy's artillery attack gained in fury, but not in accuracy. While withdrawing under a burning sun, we found the wrecks of at least forty enemy trucks, destroyed by our attack last night. The sight of bullet-riddled vehicles and corpses lying scattered about was gruesome.

At last we reached a steep slope occupied by the Sakai Unit. Lt. Matsunobu, adjutant of the Sakai Unit, took us to inspect several sand hills about 500 meters away, where we found bodies of Soviet soldiers piled one upon another in the semipermanent enemy positions. He described how an estimated 300 enemy troops, occupying these positions, had been annihilated by the infantry's surprise night attack of the previous night. He told us that the Sakai Unit alone had captured 24 Maxim guns, 30,000 rounds of Maxim gun ammunition, and two field artillery pieces.

We marched on to the left, until at last we arrived at the Headquarters of the Seki Unit. We discovered that two privates were missing. About 2400 hours, I was awakened by a telephone call from the Headquarters of the Seki Unit, which informed me that Pvt. Fuchigami had returned safely. Being unaware of our withdrawal, he had slept in a trench for seven to eight hours but, when he



awakened, he found that a number of Soviet soldiers had occupied the trenches only a few meters away. Surprised, he jumped out of the trench and made a dash for his life. However, after running several hundred meters, he found that his gas mask was missing. The gas mask container strap had been cut by an enemy bullet, and he had dropped the gas mask in his dash. Since gas masks were regarded as military secrets, he sneaked back into enemy territory, found his mask with great difficulty, and then returned to the Japanese positions safely.

### Trench Life

Although enemy activity decreased after the night attack by the infantry on the 8th, they continued to shell us, sometimes quite effectively, apparently using previously established markers. At 1830 hours on the 11th, a 15-cm. shell fell on our rear wagon lanes, killing five and wounding twelve.

Three days after we had first missed him, PFC Hokazono returned to the unit. In the dash back to our old positions on the 9th, he had realized that he had forgotten his gas mask. Horrified, he had gone back to the abandoned position to find the highly classified gas mask, but when he found the position occupied by Soviet soldiers, he abandoned his original intent. He was discovered, fired at, and pursued, but after several lucky incidents, was able to evade capture. He had lost his bearings, however, and after

wandering about on the vast, treeless plain for two days, had been discovered by the Yamagata Unit and returned to us. He had not known that another soldier had carried his gas mask back for him.

Toward evening on the same day, four enemy tanks appeared at a point about five kilometers northeast of Hill No. 738. They had apparently come to retrieve the four 15-cm. cannons which they had abandoned at the time of our night attack on the 8th. The Yamagata Unit immediately opened fire with its AT gun. After two or three rounds, the first tank was hit and set afire, but it continued to advance and finally succeeded in destroying the abandoned cannons before falling over on its side.

Several nights later I heard somebody cry out, "Enemy tank!" Soon thereafter, a strange explosion was heard and an enemy tank began burning about two or three hundred meters to the front. The sound was not that of cannon fire. Later, I learned that an infantryman in our trench had destroyed the enemy tank by throwing a soft drink bottle filled with gasoline. Since we had destroyed nearly 300 enemy tanks on the 3d, each soldier in our force had gained great confidence against enemy tanks.

At Balshagar we spent every day in the sand. There are desert areas here and there on the vast grassy plain. Every desert area was a deep hollow which protected us from enemy shells. We led the lives of moles at Balshagar. As a matter of fact, we thought it

was safer to fight on sandy land, because the danger of flying shrapnel and debris was greatly decreased. There was the danger, however, of trenches collapsing when an enemy shell landed too near. Consequently, everyone went to sleep with a shovel near at hand.

The sand moves all the time, so the ancient Chinese called the desert a moving river. Unlike Japan, the sand is so fine and light that even a gentle breeze raises a cloud of sand. The extreme temperature ranges, burning hot in the daytime and shivering cold at night, on the Hulun Buir Plains are believed due to the sand.

Life in the trenches is dull, restricted, and close; the extremes of temperature and the periodic harassing fire of enemy guns only make trench life harder to bear. The Hulun Buir Plain is a vast, flat expanse with no distinguishing geographical features; it is easy to become lost in the heavy darkness of the plains. There were many Russians who wandered into our positions. The largest single group taken consisted of eleven Russians who blundered into the Sakai Unit position on the 10th.

What troubled us most in our trench life at Balshagar were the flies and mosquitoes. The Mongolian mosquitoes are insensitive, audacious monsters who are able to suck the blood of their victims even through clothing. With the increase in casualties on both sides, the number of flies increased greatly. We lived in the midst of swarms of flies.

To check the advance of our forces on the grassy plains of Balshagar, and on Noro Heights, the Soviets set piano-wire traps, 40-50 cms. high at most. Once you are caught in such a trap, you cannot easily free yourself from the entangling wires; the more you struggle, the more you are entangled. Contrary to rumor, the Soviet traps were not electrified.

### General Attack

The construction of trenches, replacement of troops, and replenishment of ammunition had been in progress all along the front. On the evening of 15 July, tractor-drawn 15-cm. howitzers arrived, and preparations for the general attack were almost complete.

On the morning of 19 July, I and one of my men went to reconnoiter enemy positions. This day, the Nagano Unit had been subjected to violent enemy tank attack since early morning; the enemy tanks were equipped with flame-throwers. At first, the situation was serious for the Nagano Unit.

Our reconnaissance affirmed the fact that the enemy was constructing semipermanent positions at both Mitsubosa and Jugan Heights, to block our advance to the confluence of the Halha and Holsten Rivers.

### 20 Jul

Because of heavy rain on the previous night, the general attack, which was originally scheduled for tomorrow, was postponed

to the 22d.

At around 1700 hours, 2d Lt. Matsuda and eight others arrived. Two guns were also received to replace those destroyed in combat on the 7th.

#### 21 Jul

At noon, 18 replacements arrived. With men and guns replenished, preparations for the general attack were completed. At 2030 hours, our unit changed positions in preparation for the general attack tomorrow. Our targets were the Mitsubosa and Jugan Hills. The observation post was to be set up at a point 500 meters from the targets, and the batteries 1,300 meters therefrom. The two hills were the best of the enemy strongholds commanding the bridge at the confluence of the Halha and Holsten Rivers. So far the Sakai Unit had not been able to take them despite repeated assaults. Once these strongholds fell into our hands, enemy activities in the area would be greatly checked.

The Jugan Heights are about 30 meters high. Here the enemy had dug into the hill, constructing semipermanent positions and reinforcing the inside with log revetment walls. As soon as the general attack began, the Sakai Unit was to make an assault on this stronghold under our supporting fire.

22 Jul

The sky was overcast and black as ink. The general attack was again put off till tomorrow owing to the unfavorable weather, which rendered aerial support impossible. In the meantime, enemy artillery suddenly began firing on the left wing of the Sakai Unit which had moved forward and occupied a forward position in preparation for the general attack. Despite repeated demands, we could not give the Sakai Unit support-fire for fear of disclosing our advance positions; but finally, at 1515 hours, we got permission from the Sakai Unit Headquarters. Although our fire revealed our positions to the enemy and he consequently began concentrating on our positions, the situation turned for the better and the infantry soon escaped from danger.

23 Jul

Fine weather for the general attack. Our infantry units were already deployed in extended order. At 0600 hours, the order for the general attack was finally issued and, with the firing of one gun as the signal, all of our pieces opened up simultaneously. At this time, 40 to 50 friendly bombers flew overhead toward the skies above the Outer Mongolian Plateau and the confluence of the Halha and Holsten Rivers; their bombing began soon afterward. We saw white smoke rising from enemy vehicles which were concentrated on the plateau.

By now the artillery action was in full swing. We were ordered to shift our objectives to the guns on Jugan Heights. After 50 minutes of firing, we succeeded in destroying all the enemy positions on this hill. Our infantry then commenced the assault on the hill, and although the enemy's resistance was strong, our infantry successfully carried the hill after fierce hand-to-hand combat. Shortly later, a squad of the Sakai Unit occupied Mitsubosa Heights after a heroic assault.

The Sakai Unit, after securing the two hills, moved up close to the Halha River to confront the enemy. Our unit was ordered to establish positions on Mitsubosa Heights. We promptly began firing on the enemy infantry in front of Mitsubosa Heights after moving to the hill. The Kai Unit continued to fire upon the bridge at the confluence of the Halha and Holsten Rivers, where the retreating enemy was beginning to mill about in great confusion, and we finally succeeded in destroying the bridge.

The roaring of guns ceased after sunset. The enemy retreated to the opposite bank of the Halha River, leaving the two hills and all other key frontal positions to us. On this day our unit alone fired about 1,000 shells. Our guns continued firing for 15 hours, almost with no break (the first shell was fired at 0650 hours). Tonight, our infantry was to advance to the right bank of the Halha River, mop up enemy remnants, and destroy the bridge completely.

### Water and Plains

Despite his defeat on 23 July, the enemy was still concentrating to the rear. Reports reaching friendly intelligence agencies stated that 1,000 tanks and 1,000 aircraft were concentrating at Tamsag in Outer Mongolia under a new commander; and that the enemy, who had lost hope of success in a direct frontal attack, might carry out a gas attack against us. Anyway, it was known that the enemy was contemplating new tactics.

Meanwhile, we were leading a monotonous life on the Balshagar Plain, suffering from severe heat and thirst during the day and intolerable cold at night. Water became critical.

One day, to our frantic delight, we found in a depression about five meters away from our trench, a shell crater filled with clear water. An enemy shell had miraculously hit one of the underground water channels in the desert.

It was unbearable for us to see Soviet soldiers bathing and sporting about in the faraway Halha River, while we suffered from lack of water. As a result of the severe water shortage, amoebic dysentery spread rapidly among our troops. In addition to troubles with disease and the serious shortage of water, our force (which was approximately 200 kilometers south of the supply base) was distressed with a shortage of food. We had rice only several times a month, and the usual ration was hardtack and canned beef. When the battle



began to increase in intensity, however, a round of ammunition and a gallon of gasoline became more important than food.

About the middle part of July, after we had fought battle after battle, rice and water became extremely scarce. To augment the food shortage, the troops ventured out during lulls in the battle to shoot wild geese and deer. Game was scarce near the battlefield, however. The best place was the vicinity of Chiangchunmiao, where the men went to cut trees and obtain logs to reinforce trench fortifications, and where there was a lake on which wild fowl were frequently seen.

#### "Nomonhan Apartments"

At Balshagar the shortage of provisions was the greatest menace, next to the intense enemy fire. As I have said, it was very hot during the day and very cold at night, and we were harassed by swarms of mosquitoes and flies. However, we human beings have the capability of adjusting ourselves to our environment. We often found ourselves completely oblivious to the dangers of war, and endeavored to make our life as pleasant and comfortable as possible by ingenious use of whatever material was available in our sector. For example, we improvised bathtubs by cutting oil drums vertically in half. We filled them with the rain water collected in shell holes and took baths wearing our steel helmets, even in the midst of enemy bombardments. One day, 1st Lt. Takahashi was taking a bath

when more than 10 enemy fighters came in for a strafing attack. He had to dive for the nearest foxhole, stark naked.

We decked the dugouts with bunches of flowers and used canvas sheets (from tents abandoned by Soviet troops) for curtains. When a field post office was established, many wrote letters on desks made of empty ammunition boxes.

Construction of the "Nomonhan Apartments," each capable of accommodating four or five men, was started at the suggestion of Lt. Tomiyoshi and Sgt. Furukawa. Dugouts were constructed, the depth of an average man. Then the walls were covered by piling up empty ammunition boxes, and the roofs were made of boards from the boxes. The construction was completed in less than two days, for there were carpenters, plasterers, and other skilled men among the soldiers. These "apartment" dugouts were equipped with curtains, desks, and beds. Many men from other units who wanted to build similar dugouts came to see ours. We continued to add improvements to make our life more comfortable.

2d Lt. Hashimoto prepared memorial tablets for scores of dead comrades and placed them on shelves made of empty boxes, extending around the walls of his dugout. Lt. Tomiyoshi always prayed before them each morning and evening.

One man made clogs for us from the thick boards of ammunition boxes. For thongs he used wire and leather which had been abandoned by the enemy. Men also made tableware from fuse boxes and

empty cans.

We sat in our comfortable dugouts and often indulged in reminiscences about our homes. The men usually talked about farming, summer festivals, and other fond experiences, and also about all the good things they would eat when they returned home.

### Soviet Actions

We had heard of the frightful Soviet artillery fire, and this fact was evident from the battle experience at Changkufeng; but the intense, around-the-clock pounding we received from the Soviet artillery far surpassed our imagination. Although their lines of communication were four or five times longer than ours, the Russians seemed to have stockpiled a stupendous amount of ammunition at Nomonhan by using over 10,000 trucks. At first we could not understand why they fired ceaselessly even at midnight, when no target could be distinguished. We supposed that the enemy was either intending to fatigue us by keeping us awake all night or was afraid of our night assaults. More probably, the real purpose was to prevent our changing of positions under cover of darkness. Some hits were scored during those bombardments.

The quantity of ammunition expended by the enemy must have been tremendous. In early August, enemy bombardment became so intense as to arouse my interest, and I used my stop watch to count the number of shells they fired: one shell per second when the enemy firing

was comparatively light, but two or three when it was intense. According to our statistics, enemy artillery fire was most heavy regularly between 0900 hours and 1000 hours, around 1500 hours, and once or twice at night. It seemed to us that the enemy was following a fixed daily pattern in firing, and seldom changed the target once firing started. The shelling was comparatively accurate against our positions which had been captured from the enemy earlier, since they used mounds built before abandoning the positions as reference points.

Soviet artillery fire was most intense from the latter part of July to early August, but from August the enemy began using cast iron shells (which exploded into large fragments), probably because of the shell shortage. We judged from this change that the enemy was firing such a huge quantity of artillery shells that not even the 10,000-odd trucks supplying the front, and the much-vaunted Soviet productive capacity could meet the demand.

Fierce aerial combats were fought almost every day over the front. The highly maneuverable Japanese fighters usually got behind speedy I-16's and I-17's and shot them down.

The Japanese used observation balloons to reconnoiter the enemy, since enemy fighters (from a concealed airstrip constructed near the Halha River) intercepted our reconnaissance planes. In addition, enemy positions in Outer Mongolia were on higher ground

than ours and our artillery found it difficult to deliver effective fire. We estimated that the enemy was moving up reinforcements and was making strenuous efforts to obstruct our reconnaissance in order to conceal his troop movements.

The enemy subjected our balloons to concentrated artillery fire and aerial strafing. Around 0730 on 25 July, as soon as one of our observation balloons was raised, three enemy fighters bore in at low altitude and shot it down. The two observers met death in their flaming balloon.

The Russians generally lacked aggressiveness in the air. For instance, enemy fighters attacked our reconnaissance planes with considerable daring, but whenever our fighters appeared they fled without offering combat, even when they outnumbered us almost 10 to one.

Enemy SB and TB-bombers became very active after the Soviet artillery received a crippling blow from late July to mid-August, but we suffered very few casualties because they bombed from an altitude of 7,000 to 9,000 meters [sic].

The Soviet TB-bombers, however, conducted heavy night bombings before, during, and after the great enemy counterattack in mid-August. Their main targets were our artillery positions on high ground. Other favorite targets were logistical units, field hospitals, mortar units, and rear points, where the enemy met lighter

antiaircraft fire. The Russians attacked these rear targets ceaselessly but did not attempt to attack our AA gun emplacements or any point where one of their planes had been shot down before.

Enemy antiaircraft gun emplacements were established densely all the way from the high ground on the Outer Mongolian side, to the fork of the river, but we never saw any Japanese plane shot down. In fact, we were even told that it was safer for our reconnaissance planes to dive into the enemy antiaircraft barrage when pursued by enemy fighters. The Soviet AA guns themselves appeared to be of considerable efficiency, but perhaps the gun crews were not well trained. The most annoying experience about enemy antiaircraft fire (as far as friendly ground troops were concerned) was the large quantity of fragments and fuzes that rained down on our positions. The enemy did not fire against our bombers but fired intensely at our fighters and reconnaissance planes. The falling fragments caused few casualties but fell hard enough to put dents in our helmets.

One morning, around 0700 hours, nine enemy light bombers came in for a low-altitude attack over the Yamagata Unit. Our antiaircraft guns opened fire; one of the enemy planes was hit and its crew bailed out. Suddenly a friendly fighter swooped in and cut the cords of one of the parachutes with its wing tip. The parachutist fell to his death. The other two crewmen reached the ground

safely and were captured. The remainder of the enemy planes turned and fled as the friendly aircraft turned on them, but two were already billowing heavy black smoke, and reportedly crashed soon after they crossed the border into Outer Mongolia.

The two captured airmen were interrogated through the interpreter at the Komatsubara Unit Headquarters next day. It was learned that they had been told that they were going on maneuvers when they left European Russia. The previous day's raid was their first mission, but because they were not told that the Japanese had anti-aircraft guns and fighters, they attempted the low-altitude bombing without fear. They said that in the Soviet Union boys of 15 or 16 years undergo a mental and physical examination, and those who pass are forced to enter the air force. The two crewmen were sent to the rear after interrogation. The Japanese buried the dead enemy airman and erected a grave marker.

#### Air Battle and Close Quarters Combat

After the general offensive, the enemy's large scale counter-attacks ceased temporarily. Enemy movements to the rear of the Halha became less active and tank actions decreased in intensity. The only vigorous action continued by the enemy consisted of bombardment, which was conducted regularly: in the morning, at 1500 hours, at dusk, and at night.

In August the mornings and evenings were chilly. Indeed, at

Hulun Buir, the transition from summer to autumn was already rapidly taking place. Strong northwesterly winds began to blow.

On 1 August the battlefield was quiet from morning, except for sporadic artillery firing. Before dusk, however, enemy aircraft were sighted, coming in great numbers through the cirrocumulus clouds. Their targets seemed to be in our direction. The huge shadows of planes fell overhead, and the noses of the planes diving toward us were gray and shaped like an orange; fire was belching from all sides. The tents of the Miyao Unit sent up billowing smoke as incendiary bombs were dropped into them in rapid succession.

Nearly 80 enemy fighters (I-16) were flying over our unit, the Miyao Unit, and the rear positions. Formations of three or four planes dived almost vertically toward their targets. When a plane reached 20 or 30 meters from the ground, it made a half turn, and its machine gun began firing as it flew with its wings turned upright. This was the favorite tactic of the Soviet Air Force to avoid ground fire. The Russians planes fired heavily and scored hits; then they climbed to make another dive. I am sure that this was repeated about 10 times. After suddenly stopping this frenzied firing -- I cannot recall how long it lasted -- the enemy fighters sped off in a southwesterly direction.

The ensuing air battle with friendly planes was a fierce one that took place at very low altitudes -- 200 meters from the ground,



and even 50 or 60 meters at times. Six enemy planes were shot down in this battle, which lasted less than a minute; the others fled helter-skelter toward Outer Mongolia.

Soon the enemy opened artillery fire which seemed to herald a strong counterattack. Gun flashes of tremendous magnitude, which I had never witnessed before, were seen on the Outer Mongolian tableland. The enemy was firing from new directions, too. The entire area was enshrouded in smoke, and our position came within a firing bracket of 60 to 70 meters. As expected, the enemy launched a heavy counterattack with troop strength increasing rapidly on all fronts of the Yamagata and Sakai Units. Groups of enemy infantrymen were seen advancing toward us over the grassland in spite of our continuous fire. It was similar to the counterattack on the 7th.

The Soviets were only 40 or 50 meters from the Japanese position, and both sides were hurling hand grenades at each other in incredibly rapid succession. Though many of their comrades fell, the Russians put up an unexpectedly strong fight, since the political surveillance unit in their rear ruthlessly pushed them forward. Then four or five soldiers in our Sakai Unit positions suddenly stood up and sprayed the enemy with light machine guns, a bold feat which took both enemy and friendly troops by surprise. The enemy flinched and the Japanese charged simultaneously, leaving their hand grenades behind. In the desperate bayonet fight that ensued,

the Russians proved no match for the Japanese, and retreated, leaving behind scores of dead.

Throughout the Nomonhan Incident, the enemy infantry proved to be very weak in the absence of mechanized equipment, while the Japanese excellence in close quarter combat was apparent. The Russians, like the Chinese, never charged beyond a distance of 30 meters from the Japanese, even in cases where the Japanese had been nearly annihilated. They merely came to a point 40 or 50 meters from us, hurled numerous hand grenades at us as they shouted, and then retired. In the latter stages of the Nomonhan conflict, we became all too familiar with this habit of the Russians and repulsed the enemy troops by charging them when they approached us.

A favorite phrase of the Japanese infantrymen was "Hell in daylight, paradise at night," for in the daytime we had to endure enemy artillery fire hiding in the holes, but at night we could easily engage the foe in close quarter combat. During night assaults, we destroyed enemy infantrymen and tanks hiding behind hills or in ground depressions.

The enemy's major counterattack of that day was frustrated immediately in front of our positions and the Russians retreated, leaving from 700 to 800 dead on the battlefield. Our pursuing fire, directed against the area ranging from our positions to the Halha River, was especially disastrous to the enemy, destroying

groups of his fleeing troops and finally silencing his artillery on the Halha Heights. The counterattack started precisely at 1900 hours and ended at 2245 hours; apparently, the climax was reached at about 2040 hours.

During the period from this unsuccessful counterattack till 19 August (when the next major counterattack began), the enemy forces on our front remained inactive, although they threatened to launch a minor counterattack on 3 August.

During the twilight hours of 19 August, the enemy launched his next major counterattack. Enemy air attacks suddenly became intense on the 19th. Despite inclement weather for air operations, enemy fighters started strafing from early morning. No friendly planes flew up to intercept them that day. At about 2300 hours, enemy bombers began to attack our rear, at low altitude. The sky was completely illuminated by AA tracer shells and bullets, and flares dropped by enemy bombers; pillars of flame shot up after bomb bursts. Some bombers dropped large bombs in front of our observation post and then strafed us. The enemy carried out bombings in about 14 waves throughout the night.

Near 0700 hours on the following day (the 20th) approximately 120 enemy fighters attacked us; about 9,000 [sic] meters above them, 53 Russian bombers were flying toward our rear. Bombs suddenly began dropping in our vicinity and we were nearly stunned. There were

nine bomb craters, about seven or eight meters in diameter, before us.

Enemy air raids grew in intensity both at the front and at the rear. The enemy bombers kept flying in a huge circle, maintaining aircraft over us every moment in relays. Enemy fighters seemed to have silenced our antiaircraft guns after repeated attacks. Soviet artillery fire grew in intensity, and enemy infantrymen with tank support started action along the entire front. We could not handle this attack, since telephone communications between our observation post and the artillery positions had been disrupted by the enemy's third bombing. Finally seven or eight enemy tanks and 500 or 600 infantrymen appeared approximately 1,500 meters before us. We came under enemy bombing for the 25th time; our forces were now in great danger.

#### Combat at Noro Heights

It was now after 1100 hours, and the enemy infantrymen were about 1,400 or 1,500 meters before us, when the disrupted telephone lines were repaired and we could fire.

A hill commonly called "Sakuragaoka" [Cherry Hill] lay to the east of the deep valley of the Holsten River (which ran approximately 500 or 600 meters to the left of our position); it was defended by the Hasebe Detachment. Sakuragaoka Hill, about 20 to 30 meters high, overlooked a depression extending along the river.

In the low ground, about 400 or 500 enemy troops were seen approaching, led by about five tanks, and with their flanks completely exposed. The enemy tanks moved slowly, and the infantrymen emerged from between them, advanced, and deployed. The tanks then moved forward again and the infantrymen advanced in deployed formation. Repeating these tactics, the enemy slowly approached Sakuragaoka Hill, where our forces were totally unaware of their approach.

The tanks were apparently of a new type; machine guns with long barrels seemed to hang on the side pointing downward. Enemy infantrymen in the lead began to swing around to the west of Sakuragaoka Hill. We fired first and stopped one of the tanks with the first round of fire. The enemy infantrymen, taken completely by surprise, began to retreat but were mowed down by bursts of shrapnel. But the tank knocked out by the Imoto Battery did not go up in flames even after three successive hits. Later it was learned that the tank was a flame throwing tank and that the long protruding object which looked like a machine gun barrel was the flame thrower.

Some of the gallant enemy soldiers fired Maxim machine guns while retreating. One soldier successfully carried his wounded comrade on his back until they both finally disappeared beyond the crest line. The enemy in front of the Hasebe Unit was repulsed but the enemy in front of the Sakai and Yamagata Units was swarming over them in great numbers. As soon as they were scattered and destroyed by friendly fire, new Russian reinforcements were pushed forward by the

surveillance unit. Japanese artillery was inactive due to repeated disruption of telephone communications between the gun positions and the observation posts. Fierce air attacks continued at night and, on the following morning (the 21st), forty or fifty enemy planes attacked our rear. Enemy aircraft activity increased.

Supported by tanks, enemy infantry pushed continuously into the gap between the Yamagata and Sakai Units, and against the left flank of the latter. Our company had only two pieces of artillery remaining. During the afternoon, the enemy increased his artillery fire, deployed in the same formation, and moved forward as on the preceding day (when he had advanced toward Sakuragaoka Hill). The tanks would first advance to a certain point and the infantry would move up to them -- a maneuver which was then repeated. The infantrymen passed our flank, then stopped to avoid discovery by our friendly troops to the front. Invariable and persistent repetition of identical tactics seemed to characterize the Soviet forces, although they did show some change in their method of using tanks, between July and August.

While waiting for the enemy to approach close enough, we found five Russian soldiers pushing a field artillery gun up a fairly steep hill, apparently in an attempt to carry out close-range bombardment. We fired, and the first shell was a direct hit, which scattered the bodies of three soldiers. Subsequent antitank fire

routed the other troops. Telephone reports of a "perfect hit" came in from Lt. Hashimoto at the observation point on the hill to the front. Finally, other enemy troops seemed to have become aware of the bombardment. The tanks made a sudden turn to get behind the sand dune and began to fire at us from there. Heavy shells suddenly began to fall on our position, apparently from their alerted artillery on the hill. As a result, all of the three telephone lines connecting our observation point and the battery were cut off, thereby disrupting our bombardment till the signalmen could repair the lines.

With nightfall, the enemy's counterattacks steadily increased in intensity. That night the Sakai Unit started moving up toward Noro Heights, where the situation had become critical for the Japanese.

At dawn on the following day, the 22d, I was informed that our position would be changed. Unit Commander Ise later gave our company detailed instructions, ordering it to proceed immediately to support the Sakai Unit which was under close assault by hundreds of enemy tanks in the vicinity of the old engineer-built bridge over the Holsten River. I was also informed that our left-wing position in the sector of Noro Heights had been penetrated by a considerable number of enemy tanks, which were carrying out harassing actions.

I ordered my troops equipped as lightly as possible and, after

loading four trucks with ammunition, two days' rations, plus observation and communication apparatus, we departed at 0800 hours for the hill northeast of the old engineer-built bridge, leaving 2d Lt. Matsuda and his men at rear supply.

We reached the bridge around 0900 hours. The Holsten River was dry, and a violent east wind was blowing; the climate was like that in November in Japan. There was wreckage of Japanese vehicles, apparently destroyed by enemy tanks the previous night; also six enemy tanks, believed to have been destroyed by Japanese AAA fire from the vicinity, lay there still spouting billows of black smoke. Shells from enemy tank guns were pouring into the area. Around 1000 hours we occupied positions on the hill held by the Kobayashi and Sakai Units, on the left bank of the Holsten River. After a brief reconnaissance, we discovered enemy tanks approaching and destroyed three of them by close range fire (in the same manner as on 3 July). One tank each was destroyed by the antiaircraft artillery unit and by the infantry.

Considerable losses reportedly had been sustained at Balshagar after we artillerymen left there. In particular, the Hasebe Unit's position at Sakuragaoka Hill was said to have been penetrated by enemy tanks.

That day, the enemy's fighter attacks continued almost incessantly from evening, but the Japanese antiaircraft artillery unit



seemed unable to fire at the planes, presumably because of an ammunition shortage caused by the expenditure against tanks.

At night we pushed our position-construction work. The plan was to move from the main position in the ground depression to an auxiliary position in front, after repulsing enemy raids.

At dawn on the 23d, the enemy opened up heavy gunfire, which seemed to consist mainly of tank fire. Shells from field guns and 12-cm. guns also landed to our rear.

About 1300 hours, a considerable number of enemy infantrymen, carried on trucks and supported by 12 tanks, appeared in the distance. The infantrymen, deploying in the same formation as they had in attacking Sakuragaoka Hill, followed the tanks. When they reached a point about 1,000 meters from us, the tanks suddenly stopped and hid behind sand dunes or in ground depressions. Then the infantrymen, armed with Maxim machine guns, approached in open formation. The over-all situation was being minutely reported by Lt. Hashimoto from Hill 751. We waited for the enemy to close in and then fired. Our fourth shell hit. Then we advanced to our auxiliary position, where we fired and destroyed five Maxim machine guns in neat formation at a distance of 140 meters from us.

Thereupon, we launched pursuit fire against the fleeing enemy troops and then the tanks. The enemy suffered complete defeat with numerous casualties. From this engagement we gathered the strong

impression that since the enemy tanks behind the infantry served as a surveillance unit, the infantrymen were only too happy to take flight once the tanks were destroyed.

Late that night, 2d Lt. Takayama, leader of the observation platoon of the Kojima Unit (composed of guns seized from the enemy), returned from the Morita Unit at the forwardmost position, and gave the following account of a battle action.

When Lt. Takayama arrived at a trench, as he moved toward the point where firing from enemy tanks was concentrated, he found one Japanese noncommissioned officer and only two privates there, and he remained with them till evening. Suddenly about 300 enemy soldiers led by a young officer, aware of our weak strength, came rushing and shouting down the crest line about 100 meters ahead, with grenades in their hands. The Japanese lieutenant shot the Soviet officer who appeared before the trench, and ordered his three men to charge. The Japanese soldiers leaped from the trench and killed more than 10 Russians. The other 300 enemy troops promptly took flight before only four Japanese.

The Russians threw hand grenades as they retreated. Caught between the enemy troops and the explosion of hand grenades, Lt. Takayama and his men fought bitterly. During the pursuit they were separated from the enemy by a high crest line, and the pursuit stopped there.

On their way back to the trench, they came across 12 or 13 Russian soldiers concealed in a ground depression. In close-quarter combat they destroyed these confused and terror-stricken Russians who offered no resistance.

The favorite tactics of the Soviet troops were to fire guns or heavy machine guns from behind shrubs or groves. As expected, the enemy tanks were now firing from a low grove parallel with the crest line about 1,000 meters ahead to the left. We were almost deceived by the enemy camouflage which had the same appearance as a grove located in the vicinity.

While Lt. Takahashi was observing the enemy situation in front, he was shot in the right knee, as was Pvt. Saito.

The threat of an enemy counteroffensive increased with the steady reinforcement of snipers. We could not establish contact with our rear supply, which seemed to be in imminent danger of attack; meanwhile, night was falling.

While we were busy strengthening our positions in preparation for the enemy's night attack, an order was received at 2200 hours to advance southeast with the Kobayashi and Sakai Units and occupy new positions at a hill to the southwest of Mohorehine Obo. Our draft horses were four ri behind, and the problem now was the movement of our guns.

Fortunately one truck was provided by the Kobayashi Unit and

two more by an antitank unit which had arrived. About 0230 hours on the 24th, guns, ammunition, equipment and personnel were loaded on the three trucks and we were ready to go. The infantry had already left for the front, and we departed immediately. As we were almost completely surrounded by the enemy, the movement would have cost us considerable losses had it been a starlit night. But, fortunately, the fog which covered the plains was so thick that visibility was limited to only 50 meters.

As we pushed through the fog, the rumbling of enemy tanks could be heard constantly. During the advance, the gun carriage at the head of the unit got stuck in a swamp. We extricated it, advanced about 12 kilometers, and finally succeeded in establishing contact with the infantry at 0720 hours. There was dense fog even after sunrise.

In half an hour we had completed the reconnaissance and occupation of our position; we were preparing to fire when enemy artillery opened up at about 0900 hours. There were indications that many hostile tanks had penetrated the vicinity of the old engineer-built bridge (which we had crossed two days before) and that enemy troop strength was gradually increasing. Our plan for the day was to advance to the enemy's salient in the south, together with the Kobayashi and Morita Units, and destroy the enemy forces which were exerting pressure on our left flank.

Enemy tank actions were unusually brisk that day. Groups of 10 to 15 enemy tanks appeared one after another over the long crest line to our front and then disappeared in the fog. About 50 tanks were seen in formation in front of the eastern salient.

After the fog had gradually cleared by 1000 hours, enemy artillery opened fierce fire, while the Japanese infantry were preparing for a general offensive.

At that moment an enemy armored car suddenly appeared from the crest line on the left side and sped to the right. In its wake came a formation of about 45 tanks proceeding toward the Sakai Unit which was about to advance. After only several rounds, the Soviet commander's tank went up in flames; then another tank advancing on its left burst into flames. The enemy tanks, which had reached a point about 500 or 600 meters from our infantry, suddenly turned and began to flee. Soon afterwards, our infantrymen started to advance from the bushes where they were hidden.

The enemy tanks maneuvered quickly on the crest line, firing heavily at us. A fierce battle started at the forward positions. At 1320 hours our unit was ordered to change its site.

At first the 2d Squad was in the lead by about 600 meters, to cover the advance of my squad. There were some casualties among our infantrymen, and it was extremely difficult to advance because of heavy fire from enemy tanks operating on the crest line to our front.

The enemy concentrated machine-gun fire upon us but we continued to advance again, in order to bring our guns to the front, about 2,000 meters away.

By 1515 hours we had advanced about 1,500 meters, had occupied a position in a ground depression 300 meters from the enemy, and immediately made preparations for firing. Concentrated shelling from enemy tank guns became intense while snipers gradually closed in upon us; casualties among friendly infantry forces in our vicinity mounted rapidly.

To save the critical situation, we moved the guns forward and desperately fired at the enemy tanks. The tank advancing in the lead was knocked out by our heavy, concentrated fire; then the other tanks also came under heavy attack. After one of them caught fire, the enemy began to withdraw. The tank that last broke into flames disappeared behind the crest line. At that time the headquarters of the Komatsubara Unit was located 50 meters from the right of our gunline.

About 1625 hours, when several enemy tanks were seen pushing from the right crest line, the gun of the Tomiyoshi Squad immediately opened fire. The first round hit the lead tank and set it a-flame. After further firing, another tank was shattered and its crew immediately climbed out of the tank and disappeared. Soon we saw smoke coming up from an enemy tank in the direction of the

salient on the infantry's front; it probably had been hit in close-quarter combat. The forward infantry seemed to be fighting a difficult battle, however. Unit Commanders Kobayashi and Sakai, who took command on the front line, were wounded. Immediately after nightfall, our unit moved back to its former position, by order of the Hata Unit.

Throughout the 25th, 26th and 27th, the enemy's aerial bombardment and tank counterattacks increased in intensity. Taking especial advantage of the inadequacy of Japanese air strength, the enemy's SB's and fighters were very active. They observed the point of impact of shells, and also flew over our positions in large formations or demonstrated stunt flying to intimidate us (a characteristic of Soviet tactics).

On the 25th our air force carried out one of its very infrequent operations, heavily bombing enemy positions. In this battle two of our reconnaissance planes were lost.

Since the vicinity of the engineer bridge connecting Noro and Balshagar Heights was in danger, Headquarters was likely to be moved up to secure the area.

At night on the 26th, preparations for movement were made. Ample provisions, forage, and 1,000 rounds of ammunition were supplied to our unit. By that time the headquarters of the Ogisu Unit had arrived at the front line.

On the 26th, the following order was received:

1. Enemy tanks which advanced to the vicinity of the old and the new engineer bridges are disrupting our lines of communications. An element of the enemy has occupied the hill southeast of the bridges.

2. Advance to the engineer bridges this night and annihilate the enemy in front of the Hasebe Detachment and the Morita Unit.

The Hasebe Detachment and the Morita Unit (at Noro Heights, which formed our left flank) were already in critical condition. Fierce enemy counterattacks started on the night of the 19th with a force composed mainly of mechanized units from about five brigades, and primarily directed against our right and left flanks occupying Noro and Fui Heights. The Russians received support from persistent artillery fire and aerial bombing. This inevitably decreased our antitank combat efficiency as we gradually lost antitank weapons, and the enemy began to harass our flank and rear.

Armor need not be dreaded if we are provided with adequate antitank equipment such as tanks and guns. Once we are deprived of effective measures to counter our foe, however, enemy mechanized forces display awesome strength and wreak havoc upon friendly forces.

In the early period of the Nomonhan Incident, our infantrymen's close-quarter antitank combat frequently succeeded, as enemy tanks are easily set afire by Molotov cocktails. However, due to a gradual decrease in materials for making Molotov cocktails, as well as



the coming of cooler weather and decreasing mobility of hostile tanks, Molotov cocktails proved less effective. There was no alternative but to depend upon guns to combat enemy tanks. Moreover, our antitank weapons gradually decreased in number and in effectiveness due to protracted fighting, with the result that enemy tank activities increased in intensity.

Enemy tanks penetrated our position from a corner of Noro and Balshagar Heights along the foot of Fui Heights and the valley of the Holsten River. They advanced to the old engineer bridge and threatened the Hasebe and Morita Units on our left flank. We therefore decided to advance first toward the vicinity of the old engineer bridge, to destroy enemy forces menacing the flank and rear of the two units; then we would swing around to wipe out enemy units which had penetrated Balshagar. The enemy, however, already occupied the hill southeast of the engineer bridges in considerable strength, and started to construct positions. We were compelled to penetrate the enemy defenses to rescue our units.

The units which participated in the advance were the Kobayashi, Sakai, Matsui, Saito, Sugidate, Yotsuya Units, and our unit; with a total strength of less than one regiment. Particularly in the case of the Sakai Unit, which was taken over by Capt. Hirowatari, most of the officers, including the unit commander, had been killed or wounded in the general attack on the 24th. We were determined to

annihilate the Russians by antitank and point-blank firing, in which we excelled.

That night I requisitioned five trucks used for pulling guns (three from the Soma Detachment of the Midorikawa Unit, and two from the Headquarters of the Komatsubara and Hata Units, respectively). Preparations for departure were completed and, at 2100 hours on the 27th, orders for departure were issued.

On the Hulun Buir Plain it was already getting cold at this time of season, when late summer was still torrid in Japan. We marched on across the dark soggy desert which extended to the depression north of Hill No. 749 (the assembly point that night), maintaining contact with friendly marching units.

We felt uneasy and exercised caution at all times, since enemy tanks and trucks were seen moving in the entire vicinity centering around the old engineer bridge.

After our unit had continued its forced march for more than four hours, encountering great difficulty in maintaining liaison with friendly troops, we reached a sand dune of considerable height, which prevented us from going further. We were compelled to get off the trucks and conduct terrain reconnaissance.

Taking the right road and going around the sand dune, we arrived at our rendezvous point in less than 10 minutes. In the hollow immediately behind the sand dune (Hill No. 749) which was the

destination of our movement, friendly troops centering around the headquarters of the Komatsubara Unit were standing by for the march. Immediately after our arrival, they started their march and our unit followed on their heels. It began to rain heavily, and the road, cutting across the desert, was unsuitable for trucks.

About 20 to 30 minutes after we left the low ground, we lost contact with our force. There was a sound of enemy tanks continuously moving left, to our front; the enemy, aware of our movements, was keeping up with us close to our left flank. Then our truck, in the lead, suddenly bogged down in the swamp in the lowland. The engine raced, whereupon enemy rifle shots whizzed over our heads; but we could not return the fire, since we had been ordered to advance in silence. We were isolated among the enemy, and soon tracers and antitank shells began to fall in the darkness. Since all of us had found shelter in the hollow, the enemy shells flew over us; surprisingly, we sustained no losses.

I finally made up my mind to break through the enemy line. Trucks were successively pushed up to the high crest line and then the guns followed. Without relaxing vigilance, I organized rifle teams and charged them with the reconnaissance of the enemy situation. As we advanced, we found no hostile troops, contrary to our expectation.

The sound of the sweeping fire of machine guns was heard at a

point less than 200 to 300 meters from our unit. Since the main body of the friendly forces had just passed that point, I could not decide whether the sound came from friendly or enemy troops. I dispatched Lt. Tomiyoshi and four men to reconnoiter.

It stopped raining and the moon began to rise. I noticed three tanks standing abreast in the dark on the crest line 400 meters away at the front toward the left. I prepared to fire, locating a gunline at once and moving the trucks to the rear.

The soldiers brought up an antitank gun with 700 to 800 rounds of ammunition which the enemy had abandoned. I loaded the gun, and fired it. There was a sharp report of rifle fire from the enemy, and Lt. Tomiyoshi, out on reconnaissance, was mortally wounded. The three enemy tanks emitted flashes of gunfire. As we returned the fire, the tanks were destroyed in succession, enveloped in flames. Believing that our unit had been annihilated, the main enemy body advanced.

Under the point-blank firing of our guns, 40 or 50 enemy soldiers ran toward us. They became perfect targets 100 meters in front of our guns. Under bursts of shrapnel, they fell in rapid succession. Then I received a report that seven enemy tanks without crews had been found in the low ground in front of us. Lt. Hashimoto moved forward with an artillery piece and one antitank gun that had been captured, and fired on the tanks 30 meters away.

The first shot hit an ammunition-car attached to a tank, and the tanks were destroyed in succession before dawn.

The commander of an infantry signal unit reported that 11 Russian soldiers (apparently crew members of the abandoned tanks) had been found in a trench immediately in front of Lt. Hashimoto's gunline. Four or five Japanese infantrymen killed 10 enemy soldiers with bayonets, and the remaining one with rifle fire.

Assigned to reconnoiter the enemy situation, Lt. Tomiyoshi, Sgt. Furukawa and Pvt. Kawashima crept toward the enemy, when they heard the voices of a large number of men about 30 meters in front. As soon as Lt. Tomiyoshi called out the password to ascertain whether they were Russians or Japanese, he was shot, and the two other Japanese soldiers were also cut down almost simultaneously. All three wounded Japanese were evacuated to the gunline, but Sgt. Furukawa died soon afterwards. At the break of dawn, enemy artillerymen appeared, exposed to full view on the crest line to the right, busily loading two guns pointed at us. We immediately fired and destroyed both with five or six rounds of ammunition. Thereupon, seven or eight signalmen dashed forward and, after fierce close-quarter combat, destroyed the artillerymen as well as other enemy soldiers hiding in the vicinity.

A study of the terrain revealed that the position we had seized was the same one which we had occupied at Noro Heights on the 22d

to rescue the Sakai Unit. The enemy had, in turn, occupied it after we had evacuated it for the general attack on the 24th.

The leader of the infantry signal unit came running up, completely exposing himself above the crest line. In spite of my repeated protests, he insisted that friendly troops were approaching us. Through my field glasses I could see troops running along an undulating crest line, but there were no definite signs to indicate whether they were friendly or hostile. I climbed the crest line for further inspection.

Suspecting that the enemy had launched a counterattack, I turned my binoculars to a nearby bush and saw a Russian soldier aiming his rifle at me from a trench less than 20 meters away. I quickly threw myself to the ground but to no avail -- I was hit in the chest and lost consciousness.

After receiving first aid, I was carried to the rear in a truck together with Tomiyoshi and Kawashima. The enemy on the crest line to our left launched a fierce counterattack, and friendly artillery was attacking the approaching enemy infantry at pointblank range. Under hostile pursuing fire, our truck sped along the valley of the Holsten River but came to a halt, one of its front wheels dropping into a trench near the marsh. Thanks to a trick from the unit headquarters, we continued on our way and reached a field hospital by a lake at Mohorehine Obo. Tent No. 95 was packed with seriously

wounded soldiers awaiting first-aid treatment. Tomiyoshi and kawashima died on the way.

Next morning, 29 August, was the last day of fighting at Nomonhan.

# GLOSSARY

<u>Unit Name</u>	<u>Numerical Designation</u>
Harada	___ Co, 72d Inf Regt
Hasebe	Inf Regt, 8th BCU
Hata	3d Hv FA Brig
Imoto	___ Btry, 23d FA Regt
Ise	23d FA Regt
Kai	___ Btry, 23d FA Regt
Kobayashi	Inf Gp, 23d Div
Kojima	Prov Comp Btry, 23d FA Regt
Komatsubara	23d Div
Kusaba	___ Btry, 23d FA Regt
Midorikawa	23d Trans Regt
Miyao	1st Ind FA Regt
Morita	71st Inf Regt
Nagano	___ Btry, 23d FA Regt
Ogisu	Sixth Army
Saito	23d Engr Regt
Sakai (later Hirowataru)	72d Inf Regt
Seki	___ Bn, 23d FA Regt
Soma	___ Co, 23d Trans Regt
Sotonoki	___ Unit, Manchukuoan Army



Unit Name

Numerical Designation

Tamata

4th Tk Regt

Yamagata

64th Inf Regt

Yasuoka

1st Tk Gp

Yotsuya

Bn, IGU

## Appendix G

### DOCUMENTATION CONCERNING END OF NOMONHAN INCIDENT

Col. Takushiro Hattori, the author of the original manuscript upon which the present study is based, makes the following statement:

Because the local truce negotiations at Nomonhan followed the transfer of the high-ranking officers of the Kwantung Army command, and were conducted after the author left his post at Hsinking, he is not familiar with the details. Scant data are available to him, and he has not been able to reconstruct an authenticated version.

This Appendix is based upon the evidence of Saburo Ota, Third Secretary to the Japanese Embassy at Moscow between May 1938 and October 1940. From about August 1939, Mr. Ota worked under Ambassador Shigenori Togo in handling various aspects of the Russo-Japanese negotiations concerning Nomonhan and related problems.\*

"On 22 August 1939, when Ambassador Togo, at an interview with Deputy Foreign Commissar Lozovsky on the question of the Northern Sakhalin concessions, stressed the necessity of solving various pending questions, Mr. Lozovsky stated that the Soviet Union also desired the normalization of Soviet-Japanese relations. Thereupon Ambassador Togo took the opportunity to urge upon him that it was

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\* Def. Doc. 1581, Exhibit No. 2659, IAFFE, Transcript, 27 May 47, pp. 23,092-104. - Ed.

essential to solve, together with other questions, the frontier questions between Manchukuo and the Soviet Union as well as those between Manchukuo and Mongolia, in order to improve relations between the two countries. To this, Deputy Commissar Lozovsky replied that the Soviet Union would study any concrete proposal of Japan regarding the boundary problem, indicating that the Soviet Union also desired to solve the incident through diplomatic negotiations.

"Accordingly, Ambassador Togo exchanged telegrams with Tokyo, and having received the concrete instructions which the Japanese Government sent after consultation with the Manchukuo Government, met Commissar Molotov on 9 September. He expressed to the Commissar the desire of the Japanese Government to solve various pending issues between the two countries with mutual good-will in order to improve general relations, and conveyed to the Commissar that (1) it was proposed to determine the Manchukuo-Soviet and Manchukuo-Mongolian border; (2) there was no objection to the establishment of a commission for the solution of border disputes; and (3) a commercial treaty would readily be negotiated. In response to Mr. Molotov's query as to the disputes which the commission as proposed in (2) was to consider, Ambassador Togo told the Commissar that the Nomonhan Incident should be solved as soon as possible because the adjustment of relations would be difficult if further conflict were

to develop [at] Nomonhan. Replying to the further query as to the Japanese proposal for the solution of the incident, Mr. Togo explained in detail the Japanese proposal for demilitarizing the disputed area with a view to avoiding further conflict and contributing to the improvement of relations between the two countries.

"At the second meeting of 10 September, Commissar Molotov stated to Ambassador Togo (1) that the demarcation of the Manchukuo-Soviet and Manchukuo-Mongolian border and the establishment of a commission for the solution of border disputes were considered appropriate, but that such a commission should handle disputes on land which might occur in future as well as invasion of territorial waters in Kamchatka and Sakhalin; (2) that the conclusion of a treaty of commerce was desired; and (3) that as to the Nomonhan Incident, it was the intention of the Soviet Union to restore the status prevailing before the incident and to solve the incident by withdrawing forces of both parties to the line contended for by the Soviet Mongolians, and that it was considered that that line should be established as the legitimate line inasmuch as it had been fixed for years and that therefore the establishment of a demilitarized zone was not deemed reasonable.

"Ambassador Togo replied to the Commissar that (1) he would reply to the Russian proposal for extending the competence of the above-mentioned commission to Kamchatka and Sakhalin after consultation with his government; that (2) as to the Nomonhan Incident,

the Outer-Mongolian forces had started to invade the Nomonhan area, where they had never been stationed before March or April of this year, and the disputes spread after May; that according to the Russian proposal of the restoration of the original status, the Soviet-Mongolian forces were to retreat to the left bank of the Khalkha [Halha] River and so there was not much discrepancy between the Russian and Japanese proposals; and that the Japanese proposal offered to establish a demilitarized area in spite of the fact that the Japanese-Manchukuoan forces had been stationed in the Nomonhan area even before the incident.

"Commissar Molotov insisted that it had to be clarified that it was not 'demarcation' of the border but was 'redemarcation' thereof, and repeated that the border-line that had existed prior to the incident should be restored and that upon securing Japan's agreement to it the Russian forces would retreat to the line. Ambassador Togo asserted that Japan could not accept the Soviet proposal because Manchukuo believed the Nomonhan area to be her territory, insisting at the same time upon the necessity of solving the incident and calming down the tense atmosphere prevailing on the spot.

"At the third meeting of 14 September, Ambassador Togo offered a compromise plan in which it was proposed that the status prevailing prior to May 1, 1939 should be restored and that both forces

should cease hostilities for this purpose. Although Mr. Togo explained that the Japanese proposal was generally in agreement with the Soviet proposal except that it did not include the problem of the border line, Mr. Molotov insisted that Japan should recognize the Soviet assertion that the line upheld by the Soviet-Mongolians had existed prior to May 1. As Commissar Molotov insisted on his stand in a long discussion, Ambassador Togo stated that so long as the Soviet Union did not agree to the proposal of restoration of the original status, the only solution should be to cease hostilities at a line held at a certain time and requested the Soviet Union for reply. The Commissar promised to consider the matter and make reply.

"At the fourth meeting of 15 September Commissar Molotov stated that the Soviet Union could accept the Japanese proposal of cessation of hostilities made the day before, and agreed thereto, and at the same time proposed a draft agreement on the establishment of a joint commission for border demarcation composed of two representatives of Japan and Manchukuo on the one side and two representatives of the Soviet Union and Mongolia on the other. Thereupon, the Commissar and the Ambassador consulted about the time of cessation of hostilities and related matters, as well as the joint commission for demarcation, and the agreement for the cessation of hostilities was concluded at about 2 A. M. of the 16th. It was

also agreed that the form of the agreement should be oral instead of in writing. It was decided that the contents of the agreement were to be made public at 3 A. M. of the 16th in a joint communique....

"As to the establishment of the joint commission for the Manchukuo-Mongolian border demarcation based on the agreement of cessation of hostilities at Nomonhan, negotiations were subsequently conducted between Ambassador Togo and Foreign Commissar Molotov, and as a result, an agreement was reached between them on 19 November 1939. In accordance with the agreement, the representatives of Japan, Manchukuo, the Soviet Union and Mongolia held eight conferences in Chita between 7 and 25 December, and another eight in Harbin between 5 and 30 January of the following year. The work of the commission for the demarcation of the border in the Nomonhan area and the district south of Arshan [Arshaan] River came to a deadlock because of differences of opinion after the studies in these sixteen conferences based on maps and documents of high authenticity.

"Although the discussions in these conferences foreshadowed the future of the negotiations, Ambassador Togo resumed the negotiations concerning the matter around March of 1940, and had frequent conferences with Commissar Molotov and other officers. An agreement was finally reached between Mr. Togo and Mr. Molotov on

9 June relative to the border demarcation of the disputed area and determining the border-line on the map.

"The agreement concerning the demarcation of the border in the Nomonhan area, signed by Ambassador Togo and Foreign Commissar Molotov on 9 June 1940, and the map attached thereto, have been submitted to the Tribunal by the prosecution.... In the lower part of this map is the notation, 'The border line between the Mongolian People's Republic and Manchukuo in the Khalkin Gol area prior to the agreement of 9 June 1940', and 'The border line between the Mongolian People's Republic and Manchukuo in the Khalkin Gol area according to the agreement of 9 June 1940'. Such markings, however, did not exist on the map attached to the agreement then signed. Before the Togo-Molotov agreement there had never been in the disputed area any border line markings recognized by international agreement. Next to the above-mentioned markings is written 'Scale 1:1,000,000'. I recall that at the time of the Togo-Molotov negotiations maps of scale 1:1,000,000, prepared by the Kwantung Army, were used, but that at the time of the signing of the agreement the 1935 edition of scale 1:200,000, prepared by the Soviet Army General Staff, were [sic] used for the sake of convenience. The Togo-Molotov agreement actually mentions this. I recall, furthermore, that that part of the disputed area which the Mongolian People's Republic ceded to Manchukuo in accordance with the Togo-Molotov agreement was the triangular area of the Harat Mountains



and the narrow area south of the Arshan River, whereas Manchukuo agreed to cede to the Mongolian People's Republic the area between the Khalkha River and the new boundary.

"In order to clarify on the ground the new boundary determined on the map, Ambassador Togo and Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs Lozovsky made necessary arrangements on 18 June with regard to the constitution and duties of the border-demarcation commission on the spot. In accordance with the arrangement the representatives of Manchukuo and Mongolia held six conferences in Chita between 3 and 24 August and agreed upon technical matters, and started operations on the spot after the beginning of September. Meanwhile, Ambassador Togo was ordered home [by Foreign Minister Matsuoka] on 29 August and left Moscow on 20 October for home. I left for home also, on 18 October.

"...the settlement of the Nomonhan Incident marked the beginning of normal relations between Japan and the Soviet Union....

"The operations on the spot concerning the border demarcation in the Nomonhan area were practically at a standstill after December 1940, owing to disagreement of views between the Manchukuoan and Mongolian representatives. However, immediately after the conclusion of the Neutrality Pact in April 1941 an agreement was reached between Ambassador Tatekawa and Commissar Molotov that the operations on the spot should be concluded within the year 1941.

Accordingly, the representatives of Manchukuo and Mongolia met in Chita after 18 May, and after reaching agreement on technical matters on 14 June, started operations on the spot on 27 June. The work was carried on in spite of the Soviet-German War, until it was completed 17 August, when border-markers were established throughout the entire disputed area. The matter had been completely solved two years after hostilities ceased.

"The general protocol and documents attached, drawn by the border-demarcation commission on the ground, were signed in Harbin on 15 October. Although it had been agreed that the governments of Manchukuo and Mongolia would recognize these documents by exchanging notes on 5 December, this failed to materialize because of procedural delays on the part of the Mongolian Government and for the convenience of the Government of the Soviet Union. The notification of the recognition of these documents was completed in Harbin on 15 May 1942."

## Appendix H

### SOVIET ARMY VERSION OF NOMONHAN INCIDENT

#### Editor's Preface

Pertinent Soviet Army data concerning the Nomonhan Incident, derived from the transcript of proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, were incorporated into the text of Books B and C, Part 3 of the present study. A new Soviet source recently became available, of sufficient historical significance to warrant inclusion as a separate appendix: Soviet Army Colonel S. N. Shishkin's Khalkhin-gol (Military Publishing House, Ministry of Defense, Moscow, 1954). Editing and abridgment have been effected from a basic translation furnished by Mr. P. Maternan, AFPE Psychological Warfare Service, Hq AFPE/SA (Rear), whose valuable assistance is hereby gratefully acknowledged. Statistics and operational maps included in Col. Shishkin's volume have already been cited in Books B and C, Part 3 of the present study (see Table of Contents).

#### Background

In the literature of military history the name of the Khalkhin-gol [Halha River] has become common. Near the banks of this river, Soviet and Outer Mongolian troops routed the Japanese forces which trespassed into the Mongolian People's Republic in 1939. The fighting went on at a time when the international situation was complicated.

American and Anglo-French imperialists made it known that they were against the spread of Japanese influence in Southeast Asia but had nothing against a Japanese campaign vs. the Soviet Union.

The Japanese imperialists, fierce enemies of the Soviet Union, long nourished war plans against the U.S.S.R. Despite the fact that early attempts to seize the Soviet Far East and Siberia had ended in complete failure, the Japanese ruling circles did not abandon their aggressive course and their plans of achieving world domination.

Instead of checking the [German and Japanese] aggressors, the United States, Great Britain, and France hid behind a policy of non-interference and actually encouraged the aggressive designs of the Axis Powers. It was thought that if Germany and Italy fought the Soviet Union, the belligerents would weaken each other. Then the advocates of non-interference could dictate their conditions to the weakened participants. For these reasons, Japan's hands were left untied in China and available for provocations against the U.S.S.R. and Outer Mongolia. Just as in the case of the Lake Khasan [Chang-kufeng] Incident of 1938, the Japanese attack upon Outer Mongolia in 1939 was but one link in a chain. In spite of remoteness from Europe, the Far Eastern theater was intimately connected with events in the West. Japan sought to occupy operationally valuable military bases for use in any future war with Russia. At the same time the Japanese wanted to test the military preparedness of the Soviet Army.

Then again, Japan was a member of the Axis and was acting in the interests of Germany by waging hostilities along the Soviet Far Eastern frontiers in order to distract Russian attention from the West.

The defeat of the Japanese near the Khalkhin-gol had far-reaching military and political consequences. In the battles, the Soviet Army demonstrated to the world its indestructible military might, its first-class military techniques, and the high operational and tactical abilities of the generals and the officer corps. By delivering a smashing blow to the Japanese, the Soviet Army insured the security of Far Eastern Russia and the integrity of her frontiers.

Although the scope of the Khalkhin-gol operations was insignificant by comparison to the war of 1941-45 in Russia, the conflict nevertheless included large-scale engagement of air power, tanks, and armored cars. The instructional value of such operations was great. They produced one of history's most brilliant examples of encirclement and utter annihilation of a military foe. The battles were characterized by extremely difficult conditions: desert land, a complete absence of roads, and extended lines of communication on the part of the Soviet-Mongolian forces.

## Prelude

The territory of Outer Mongolia was long the objective of Japanese imperialism. From the beginning of the Soviet period, the Japanese attempted to convert Mongolia into a colony by creating a "Greater Mongolian Nation" extending from Lake Baikal to Tibet, and from Manchuria to eastern Turkestan. The Mongolian people with the aid of the Soviet Union destroyed all the plans of the foreign imperialists and ejected these agitators and their White assistants.<sup>1</sup> In spite of their setbacks, however, the Japanese never abandoned their designs.

Mongolia attracted Japanese attention not so much for its natural resources as for its strategic location. In Japanese plans, Mongolia was the key to Soviet Asia and a base of attack along the shortest operational route leading directly into the Soviet Trans-Baikal from the south. Mongolia threatened the entire Soviet Far East.

In order to justify their adventures before public opinion, and thereby foment an excuse for the invasion of Outer Mongolia, the Japanese militarists laid claim to portions of Mongol territory lying on the eastern banks of the Khalkhin-gol. In order to prepare a legal basis for these claims, the Japanese faked the printed national boundaries of Outer Mongolia. False Japanese maps of 1935 arbitrar-

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1. The author is here referring to political complexion. - Ed.

ily shifted the borders 20 kilometers westward, thus placing the frontier along the Khalkhin-gol itself.

The international situation encouraged the Japanese to launch a number of provocative attacks against the territory of Outer Mongolia (around Lake Buir Nor) in 1935-36. When, on 12 March 1936, the U.S.S.R. and the Mongolian People's Republic signed a military assistance agreement, the Japanese ruling circles knew about it. They well understood that a continuation of the attacks against Outer Mongolia would mean the simultaneous military involvement of the Soviet Union. The Japanese, nevertheless, remained bent upon testing forces on a scale larger than at Lake Khasan.

In China, however, the prolonged war waged by the Japanese demanded the concentration of all their strength and resources. Stuck there, they could not commence the realization of their large-scale ambitions vs. Outer Mongolia. They therefore undertook only a very limited objective in 1939: forcefully to detach the eastern portion of Outer Mongolian territory, which represents a wedge into Manchukuo. On 31 October 1939, V. M. Molotov, reporting on the foreign policy of the Soviet Government, stated that [the Nomonhan Incident] "was created by Japan in her attempt to occupy part of the territories of the Mongolian People's Republic and thereby change to her advantage the Mongol-Manchurian frontiers, by force."

If the Japanese were successful, they intended to penetrate Soviet territory in order to cut the Trans-Siberian rail network, there-

by severing European Russia from her Far East. To concentrate their forces, the Japanese had a suitable staging area between the Greater Hsingan range and the Soviet-Mongolian frontiers. Two relatively well-developed railroads led into this region from the interior of Manchukuo. One led from Tsitsihar to Hailar via Pokotu; the other from Taoan (Paichengtzu) toward Kanchuerhmiao via Solun.<sup>2</sup>

To prepare for the deployment of their forces, the Japanese fortified the vicinity of Hailar; took steps to increase the operational capabilities of the Harbin-Tsitsihar-Hailar rail line; and commenced the construction of a railroad from Solun to Kanchuerhmiao. The eastern salient of Outer Mongol territory comes close to the foothills of the Greater Hsingans at a point where the Taoan-Solun line enters the Bargut [Inner Mongolian] region after traversing the mountain passes. This wedge can block the exit to the lowlands and explains the Japanese action in beginning the construction of the Solun-Kanchuerhmiao line, close to the borders. Since the new line was located near the Hsingan passes, however, it could serve as a useful axis for offensive operations launched from Outer Mongolia into Manchukuo, or for assaults against the flank and rear of the fortified zone at Hailar. The characteristics of the strategic situation were deemed unsatisfactory by the Japanese, who decided to correct things by force.

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2. See Map No. 8, "Transportation Facilities, West Manchuria," in Vol. III, Japanese Studies on Manchuria, Part 4. - Ed.



Nor should it be overlooked that the Japanese wanted to restore, in the eyes of the public, the prestige lost when the Japanese Army was defeated by the Soviets near Lake Khasan, the year before.

At the beginning of 1939, Japanese preparations for an attack on Outer Mongolia increased visibly. Moving from the interior of Manchukuo, Japanese troops concentrated near the eastern frontiers of Outer Mongolia. Aircraft were moved in from North China and Japan itself, while heavy artillery was hauled from Port Arthur.<sup>3</sup> The Kwantung Army command took advantage of the poor organization of the Outer Mongolian border guard system east of the Knalkhin-gol to conduct a number of reconnaissance missions in the region of the forthcoming operations.

Japanese violations of the Outer Mongol borders were committed openly. On 14 January 1939, several regiments of Japanese and native cavalry attacked the Outer Mongols' 7th Border Outpost, in the vicinity of Nomonhan Burd-obo. The Mongolians were surrounded, one cavalry <sup>4</sup>tsirik was wounded, and the outpost commander was captured. Two weeks later, 21 Japanese-fabricated leaflets were found, over the alleged signature of the captured outpost chief, calling for a break-off in friendship between the U.S.S.R. and the Mongolian People's Republic.

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3. Believed to be confused with the case of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, not 1939. - Ed.

4. Tsirik: A private soldier in the Outer Mongolian Army. - Ed.

On many other occasions in February and March 1939, Japanese troops in varying strength violated Outer Mongolian territory on the eastern shores of the Khalkhin-gol. By May, the provocations assumed the proportions of open military operations waged by regular Japanese Army forces. On 11 May 1939, Japanese and native cavalrymen, some 300-strong, attacked a Mongol border outpost inside the territory of Outer Mongolia while, at the same time, Japanese aircraft went into action against Mongol border guard stations.

The threat of attack by the forces of Japan and Manchukuo loomed over the Mongolian People's Republic. As a consequence, the Soviet Government decided to defend the Outer Mongolian borders as if they were its own. In conformity with the Russo-Mongol treaty of mutual assistance, the Soviet Army command ordered the transfer of certain of its forces to the region of Tamsag, located 125-30 kilometers from the Khalkhin-gol.

#### Local Characteristics

The type of terrain over which the battles were fought greatly affected the nature of the operations. East of the Khalkhin-gol [alleged by the Soviets to be Outer Mongol territory] the battle zone extended 20 kilometers; the frontage totalled 60-70 kilometers. The land east of the Khalkhin-gol is characterized by sand dunes and hillocks (reaching elevations of 40-50 meters above the surrounding

country) and by valleys, hollows, and furrows as deep as 40 meters. The sand hills and the depressions greatly complicate directional orientation, while at the same time they facilitate the camouflage of firing positions. Action by tanks and armored cars is extremely difficult in certain sectors, while motor transportation is almost impossible.

The region [of Nomonhan] is divided into a northern and a southern sector by the Holsten River, a tributary of the Khalkhin-gol. The Holsten is 3-4 meters wide and two meters deep, with an extremely muddy valley that reaches a width of 1,500 meters. Valley slopes are sandy and steep--15-30 degrees, sometimes 45 degrees. Inasmuch as the Holsten invariably separated the field forces into two groups, it became very difficult to maneuver in concert, especially where armor and artillery were concerned.

Parallel to the battle front, the Khalkhin-gol traverses the entire region. The river's width reaches 120-130 meters; its depth is two meters or more; and its current flows at the rate of 0.8 meters per second. Constituting a deep hollow, 1-3 kilometers wide, the valley of the Khalkhin-gol is sometimes extremely muddy. Steepness of the valley floor varies from 25-30 degrees on the northeast to a maximum of 75 degrees along certain portions of the western shores. The region west of the river is a flat and sandy plain, devoid of natural camouflage or hiding places. This side of the waterway is dominated by the eastern shores, a fact which figured

prominently in the Japanese Army's attempt to seize the eastern banks.

Mention was previously made that two rail lines [i.e., routes] approach the combat zone from the interior of Manchukuo. The first (formerly called the Chinese Eastern Railway) passes within 120 kilometers of the region, while the newly built second line extends from Solun to Kanchuerhmiao,<sup>5</sup> with its nearest station (Handagai) situated 60 kilometers from the battle front. In addition to the rail lines, two dirt roads lead from Hailar to the borders of Outer Mongolia; they were used by the Japanese to transfer troops and organize their rear.

The region selected by the Japanese to attack was extremely unfavorable from the standpoint of the Soviet-Mongolian forces. The nearest railroad station was at Borzysa, 75 kilometers away, while the battle zone itself was unpopulated and devoid of adequate water supplies. West of the Khalkhin-gol, the flat and open desert country rendered direction-finding difficult on the part of ground troops, at the same time that the terrain was under the constant threat of observation from the sand hillocks east of the river.

The troops of the Outer Mongolian Army knew the area only poorly, and even lacked maps. On the other hand, the Japanese had managed to photograph the terrain and had prepared satisfactory maps

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5. This line extended only to Handagai. See Map No. 12, Part 3, Book B, Vol. XI, Japanese Studies on Manchuria. - Ed.

on a scale of 1:100,000. In commencing operations on the remote eastern borders of Outer Mongolia, the Japanese Army was counting upon terrain features which were extremely favorable to their cause, but conversely unfavorable to the Soviet-Mongolian forces.

### Military Actions

From the 11th through the 26th of May 1939, reconnaissance engagements were waged east of the Khalkhin-gol. By 27 May the Japanese had concentrated a large group near the Outer Mongol border in the vicinity of Nomonhan Burd-obo. These forces consisted of troops from the 23d Infantry Division plus Bargut cavalry, all under [Col.] Yamagata, commander of the 64th Infantry Regiment, 23d Infantry Division. The Yamagata force comprised the 64th Infantry Regiment, the 23d Division Reconnaissance Unit (Lt. Col. Azuma), a Motorized Company (Capt. Kawano), the 8th [Bargut] Cavalry Regiment, and elements of the 1st and 7th Bargut Cavalry Regiments.

To defend the borders, Soviet-Mongolian forces were moved up: the [Outer Mongolian]<sup>6</sup> 15th and 17th Cavalry Regiments and cavalry squadrons, in addition to an infantry battalion<sup>7</sup> of the [Soviet] 11th Tank Brigade. Supporting strength was provided by a [Soviet] armored car company, an engineer company, and a motorized 76-mm. gun battery. Groups and elements pulled out of the 11th Tank Brigade

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6. Organic regiments of the Outer Mongolians' 6th Cavalry Division. - Ed.

7. Listed as an "infantry-machine gun battalion" by the translator. - Ed.

were combined under the command of Bykov, the battalion commander after whom the task force was named.

Soviet and Mongolian troops were deployed on both sides of the Holsten River. The right flank was held by the 3d Company of the 11th Tank Brigade infantry battalion. In the center--8-9 kilometers southwest (i.e., west and northwest of Nomonhan Burd-obo)--the 15th and 17th Regiments of the [Outer Mongolian] 6th Cavalry Division, plus cavalry squadrons, were stationed. On the left flank, 8-9 kilometers northwest of Nomonhan, was the 2d Company of the 11th Tank Brigade's infantry battalion. The Soviet-Mongolian troops were spread out over a frontage of 15-20 kilometers.

On the west banks of the Khalkhin-gol, near the crossing, were deployed the 1st Company of the 11th Tank Brigade battalion, the engineer company, the 76-mm. gun battery, and an artillery detachment from the Outer Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division.

The Japanese outnumbered the Soviet-Mongolian forces as follows:

Infantry	: 2:1
Cavalry	: 3.5:1
Artillery	: almost 2:1
Machine Guns	: 1.3:1

The Soviets and Outer Mongolians outnumbered their enemies in the following respects:

Regimental and Divisional	
Artillery	: 1.5:1
Armored Cars	: 5-6:1

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8. Relative strengths are presented in Table 15, Book B of the present study. Also see Map No. 14, ibid. - Ed.

At dawn on 28 May 1939, the Japanese launched an attack with the intention of surrounding and destroying Soviet-Mongolian forces deployed to the east of the Khalkhin-gol. At the same time, as many as forty Japanese aircraft commenced raids upon the river crossing site as well as the troop positions and rear of the Soviets and Outer Mongolians. The main assault by the Japanese was unleashed on their right flank. Bargut cavalry, attacking from the southern shores of the Holsten, were to assist in the projected encirclement from the southeast.<sup>9</sup>

The Japanese reconnaissance [regiment] led by Lt. Col. Azuma, including the motorized [reconnaissance] company of Capt. Kawano, sought to by-pass the Soviet-Mongolian left flank and penetrate the rear, in order to reach the Khalkhin-gol crossings and cut off the avenue of escape. As a result of the combat which started on 28 May, the Japanese succeeded in pushing back the 15th Cavalry Regiment, whose elements retreated to defend their command post.

In view of the threat to their left, the Bykov Group's 2d Company was obliged to fall back northward, simultaneously losing its right-flank support because of the retreat of the 15th Cavalry Regiment. Pushing their offensive, the Japanese forced Soviet-Mongolian forces on the left flank to pull back to the line of sand dunes situated 2-3 kilometers from the mouth of the Holsten River.

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9. See Map No. 14 in Book B, Part 3 of the present study. - Ed.

The Azuma-Kawano encirclement maneuver eventually failed. Moving along the eastern banks of the Khalkhin-gol toward the river crossing, the Japanese came under the intense artillery fire of the Soviet 76-mm. gun battery which had displaced to the eastern shore. Combined and heroic action by this battery plus the engineers and the 1st Infantry Company resulted in the virtual destruction of the Japanese force. In the center of the front, however, the Japanese succeeded in pushing the 17th Cavalry Regiment back to the southern bank of the Holsten River.

By 1900 hours on 28 May, elements of the [Soviet] 149th Infantry Regiment began moving on trucks from Tamsag toward the scene of combat. Immediately going into battle on a piecemeal basis, without organizing sufficient artillery co-ordination, the new elements exerted negligible influence on the military picture that day. Combat raged throughout the night of 28/29 May, but no decision was reached, although Soviet artillery inflicted severe losses upon the enemy.

On the morning of 29 May, the Soviet-Mongolian forces, supported by two artillery battalions, launched an attack. By 1600 hours the enemy had been pushed back 1.5-2 kilometers northeastward. During these battles on the 28th and 29th of May, 400 Japanese officers and men were killed, in addition to their wounded.

Having suffered heavy casualties, the Japanese decided to retreat behind the border [as claimed by the Soviets], using motor



transport brought up to the front for that purpose. The G-3 of the [Soviet] 57th Infantry Corps [Division?], who was directing Soviet-Mongolian actions, moved forward to the eastern bank of the Khalkhin-gol. From observers he received intelligence concerning the movement of a motor convoy toward the Japanese troop positions. Judging that this activity marked the introduction of fresh reserves by the Japanese, he decided to pull back the Soviet-Mongolian forces to the western side of the Khalkhin-gol. This error was later corrected.

For four days, because of poor reconnaissance, it was not learned [by the Soviet-Mongolian forces] that the Japanese had pulled out of Nomonhan Burd-obo. Only after 3 June did Soviet-Mongolian troops once again occupy their old positions in the region between the Khalkhin-gol and Nomonhan, thereby assuring reconnaissance security along the immediate vicinity of the frontiers.

During the battles of 28-29 May, the 1st Company of the 11th Tank Brigade battalion, the engineer company, and the 76-mm. battery performed outstandingly. Their heroic efforts smashed the Azuma-Kawano encircling effort. Especial mention should be made of the initiative and resourcefulness of the battery commander, Sr. Lt. Vakhtin. When he observed the approach of the Japanese columns, he transferred his battery to the eastern bank of the river, upon his own initiative, and unleashed destructive fire.

The Soviet engineers fought with surprising stubbornness and courage, counterattacking five or six times. Outer Mongolian armored

elements of the 8th Cavalry Division also fought heroically during the battles on 29 May.

Despite gallant actions on the part of the Soviet-Mongolian forces in the course of combat and reconnaissance, a number of weaknesses were noted. Troops which had been dispatched to the east of the Khalkhin-gol were spread thinly along a 20-kilometer front. Reserve elements of the 149th Infantry Regiment were 125 kilometers away from the locale of the fighting and could not lend expeditious help to the border forces.

The Mongolian cavalry, instead of being deployed on the flanks or conducting reconnaissance in depth, were stationed in the center, between the infantry forces. Lack of flank protection as well as of reconnaissance by the Soviet-Mongolian troops allowed the Japanese to execute an encircling maneuver and to approach the river crossing site. As a result of poorly organized Soviet-Mongolian reconnaissance measures, the withdrawal of the enemy was not discovered in time.

The first encounters with the Japanese disclosed that the Soviet-Mongolian forces concentrated near the eastern borders of Outer Mongolia were insufficient to resist the enemy. During June, new Soviet-Mongolian units were dispatched to the battle zone, in the region of Tamsag:

- 11th Tank Brigade
- 7th, 8th, 9th Mechanized Brigades
- 36th Motorized Infantry Division (less one regiment)
- One heavy artillery detachment
- More than 100 fighter aircraft
- 8th Cavalry Division (Outer Mongolian)

Combat Around Bain Tsagan, 2-5 July 1939

After their military failures in May 1939, the Japanese intensified their preparations for larger-scale operations in June. Japanese aircraft simultaneously stepped up their activities, with dog-fights occurring almost daily and sometimes developing into full-scale aerial battles. On 22 June, for example, 95 Soviet planes tangled with 120 Japanese aircraft, of which 31 were shot down. Two days later another 60 Japanese planes attempted an attack but lost 25 fighters in an engagement with 60 Soviet aircraft.

On 26 June, as many as 60 Japanese planes appeared over the region of Lake Buir Nor, where they were engaged by 50 Soviet craft. An extremely fierce two-hour air battle ensued, but the Japanese broke contact after losing 25 planes. Soviet aircraft pursued the Japanese as far as Kanchuerhmiao. Next day, about 80 enemy fighters and 30 bombers launched new raids on the territory of Outer Mongolia, in the region of Tamsag and Bain Tumen. On the 28th, 50 Japanese bombers with fighter escorts flew into Outer Mongolia near Lake Buir Nor.

During this period of aerial activity, Soviet-Mongolian forces never trespassed across the established frontiers except on individual occasions when Soviet-Mongolian aircraft were forced to overfly

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10. Hara Heights in Japanese terminology. - Ed.

Manchukuo in pursuit of Japanese planes. Nevertheless, the Japanese prepared for new and bigger provocations, despite the refusal of the Soviets and Outer Mongolians to enlarge the conflict near the Khalkhin-gol.

Toward the beginning of July 1939, the Japanese Army brought in the following forces:

- 23d Infantry Division (all; i.e., 64th, 71st, 72d Infantry Regiments)
- 7th Infantry Division (part; i.e., 26th Infantry Regiment and part of 28th Infantry Regiment)
- 3d, 4th Tank Regiments
- Hsingan Cavalry Division (4th, 5th, 12th Cavalry Regiments)  
Manchukuoan
- 1st, 7th Cavalry Regiments (remnants)  
Manchukuoan
- 8th Bargut Cavalry Regiment (all)  
Manchukuoan
- 1st Independent Artillery Regiment
- 7th Heavy Artillery Regiment
- Two detachments of antiaircraft artillery
- Several batteries of small-caliber guns and mountain guns
- More than 250 aircraft

At that time, Soviet-Mongolian forces occupied defensive positions 5-6 kilometers east of the Khalkhin-gol. South of the Holsten River was one battalion of the 11th Tank Brigade. To the north of the river were the 149th Infantry Regiment (less one battalion) and the 9th Mechanized Brigade. The left flank, along the western banks of the Khalkhin-gol, was covered by the Outer Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division. On the right flank, in the area of Kheret Ulyn, was the Outer Mongolian 8th Cavalry Division. As of 2 July 1939, the Japanese outnumbered the Soviet-Mongolian forces in infantry and artil-

lery (2:1), and in cavalry and antitank weapons (4:1). On the other hand, the Soviets and Mongolians outnumbered the enemy in tanks and armored cars (by more than <sup>11</sup> 3:1).

The activity of the Japanese air force during the period 22-27 June suggested that the enemy intended to repeat his offensive on a larger scale. The Soviet Army command therefore decided to prepare a powerful counteroffensive in depth, while firmly retaining the foothold on the eastern side of the Khalkhin-gol. For this purpose, new forces were moved up during the night of 1 July from Tamsag toward the lake area 25-30 kilometers west of the Hamardaba range; i.e., reserves consisting of the 11th Tank Brigade, the 7th Mechanized Brigade, and the 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment.

#### 12

#### Japanese Plans for July Operations

The Japanese Army's operational planning for operations in July was identical with that for the May offensive: An attempt to surround and wipe out Soviet-Mongolian activities east of the Khalkhin-gol. As in May, the main effort was slated to be executed on the enemy's right flank. The Japanese accordingly concentrated a striking force made up of the 71st, 72d, and 26th Infantry Regiments

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11. See Table 16 and Map No. 19, in Book B, Part 3 of the present study. - Ed.

12. See Map No. 18 in Book B, Part 3 of the present study. - Ed.

plus attached artillery. Under the over-all command of [Maj. Gen.] Kobayashi, the Japanese infantry group was to launch an attack in the direction of the Bain Tsagan [Hara] Heights during the night of 2/3 July. After getting across the Khalkhin-gol in this sector, the Kobayashi force intended to strike from northeast to south, in order to cut off the westward escape routes of the Soviets and Outer Mongolians.

The truck-borne Japanese 26th Infantry Regiment had been ordered to act in concert with the advancing flank of the striking force, prevent the approach of Soviet-Mongolian reserves and, in the event of a Red retreat, conduct pursuit operations. The 23d Engineer Regiment was to handle the actual river crossing and the movement of the striking group.

A second Japanese group was formed under the combined command of Lt. Gen. Yasuoka, consisting of the 64th Infantry Regiment, the 3d and 4th Tank Regiments, detachments from the 28th Infantry Regiment, and the Hsingan Cavalry Division. The Yasuoka force was to protect the striking group's flanking maneuvers and its concentration near the river crossing site (1-2 July); and to commence a decisive attack designed to encircle the Soviet-Mongolian flanks east of the Khalkhin-gol (3 July). Japanese reserves comprised one battalion of the 64th Infantry Regiment; the 23d Cavalry Regiment; and one battery.

### Combat in July

According to their prearranged plans, the Japanese unleashed an offensive on 2 July. Gen. Yasuoka's right-flank infantry and tank units attacked first, with the objective of covering the concentration and river crossing operations of the Kobayashi striking group. In the course of the ensuing combat, the Japanese succeeded in breaking through the defenses of the 149th Infantry Regiment and the [9th Mechanized] Brigade. By dusk on 2 July, the enemy had pushed the Soviet-Mongolian left flank back toward the southwest, had cut into the defenses, and had reached the artillery positions with armor. Soviet artillery repulsed the offensive with accurate fire, knocking out some 30 Japanese tanks. Eleven surviving Japanese crewmen were taken prisoner.

At 0200 hours on 3 July, the Kobayashi striking group commenced crossing the Khalkhin-gol, after having approached the river stealthily. As soon as the crossings were completed between 0700 and 0800 hours, the Japanese quickly struck toward the Bain Tsagan heights.

Although the Soviet-Mongolian Army Command had had no reports about a Japanese river crossing near Bain Tsagan, it had meanwhile received intelligence concerning an enemy infantry and tank assault against the 149th Regiment and the 9th Mechanized Brigade. Orders were accordingly issued, to the effect that (1) the Outer Mongolian

6th Cavalry Division should move up to the location marked "Ruins"  
13  
on the map, while the 15th Cavalry Regiment deployed to the eastern bank of the Khalkhin-gol to protect the left flank of the 9th Mechanized Brigade; (2) the 11th Tank Brigade should move to an  
13  
area six kilometers southwest of said "Ruins," in preparation for a flank attack to be launched from the north against the approaching foe; (3) the 7th Mechanized Brigade should displace to an area 12 kilometers northwest of Hamardaba in order to pin down the enemy from the front.

The 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment was meanwhile ordered to move up to a sector from which it might launch an attack from the west. As a consequence of the Soviet command's orders for the concentration of Russian-Mongolian reserves to execute a flank attack against the advancing Yasuoka group, the Red forces were, in effect, moving against the Kobayashi task force itself.

At about 0500 hours on 3 July, the 15th Cavalry Regiment moved up to the river crossing in an effort to get across to the eastern shores of the Khalkhin-gol, but the unit ran into Japanese engineer forces and a furious battle ensued. Under pressure by superior Japanese forces, the 15th Cavalry Regiment was obliged to fall back toward the northwest.

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13. Approximately 10 kilometers northwest of Hara Heights. - Ed.



After having negotiated the river by 0800 hours on 3 July, the Japanese proceeded to occupy Bain Tsagan Heights and to move southward along the western banks of the Khalkhin-gol. At approximately 0900 hours, the Japanese forward elements were attacked by the 2d Tank Battalion, in the vanguard of the 11th Tank Brigade, then moving toward the designated concentration area. After the Japanese had been first hit, and had learned of the movement of powerful Soviet-Mongolian armored forces, they decided to dig in around Bain Tsagan Heights and to use their antitank guns against the tanks and armored cars.

When the Soviet-Mongolian Army Command learned of the Japanese river crossing operations in the vicinity of Bain Tsagan, it was decided to attack the enemy immediately, in order to surround and destroy him. For this purpose, the 2d Battalion of the 11th Tank Brigade, plus armored elements of the Outer Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division, received orders to engage the enemy from the front and not to allow his movement southward. The bulk of the 11th Tank Brigade was to attack from the north; the 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment, from the northwest; and the approaching 7th Mechanized Brigade, from the south.

In accordance with the Command's orders, the bulk of the 11th Tank Brigade, together with the Outer Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division's armored units, deployed to attack the Japanese at about 2300 hours on 3 July. The 1st Battalion of the 11th Tank Brigade encircled

Bain Tsagan Heights from the northwest and struck the enemy from flank and rear. The 3d Battalion of the same brigade, plus Outer Mongol armored elements from the 6th Cavalry Division, attacked from the west, thus squeezing the Japanese into a steel semicircle of armor.

The 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment mistakenly moved northward, then veered back to the south and, at about 1200 hours on 3 July, attacked the Japanese from the west. At 1500 hours, the main force of the approaching 7th Mechanized Brigade entered into combat with an assault from the south.

The Japanese found themselves encircled around Bain Tsagan Heights from northwest, west, and south; eastward lay the river. Dug in on the heights with their antitank defenses, the Japanese resisted stubbornly in battles which raged throughout 3 July. At dusk (approximately 1900 hours), the Soviet-Mongolian troops launched a co-ordinated attack from three sides, but the Japanese managed to foil it; whereupon the combat continued throughout the night.

On 4 July, the enemy tried to mount a counterattack, while large numbers of his aircraft sought to demoralize the Soviets and Mongolians by striking from the skies. Red pilots thwarted the Japanese aerial effort and forced the enemy planes to retreat. On the ground, the Japanese counteroffensive collapsed under devastating artillery fire.

During the evening of 4 July, Soviet-Mongolian forces staged another combined offensive along the entire battle front, and fierce combat raged throughout the night. The Japanese fought to retain Bain Tsagan Heights at all costs. By 0300 hours on 5 July, the Japanese resistance was finally overcome by the Soviet and Outer Mongolian pressure (armor in particular). The Japanese thereupon retreated in disorder to the eastern banks of the Khalkhin-gol, blowing up their only pontoon bridge prematurely. Overcome by panic, Japanese officers and men leaped into the river before the very eyes of the Red tankers. Only the swampy shores and the depth of the Khalkhin-gol prevented the Soviet-Mongolian tanks and armored cars from crossing to the eastern shore.

On the western side of the river, the remnants of the Japanese forces were annihilated in hand-to-hand fighting. Near Bain Tsagan Heights, the enemy suffered thousands of casualties and lost a tremendous amount of weapons and materiel. During the course of the fighting in the vicinity of the heights, Soviet flyers downed 45 Japanese planes. Thus the Japanese, who sought to surround and wipe out the Soviet-Mongolian forces, were themselves encircled, with the consequent annihilation of their main body.

Soviet-Mongolian military actions around Bain Tsagan represent an outstanding case of active defense, resulting in a decisive defeat for the hostile striking force. Tanks and armored cars played the primary role in destroying the enemy. Experience in combat

indicated that mobile armor (which combines the ability to maneuver and to strike) can be effectively employed not only during the attack but also during the defense. The essentials for such employment comprise (1) proper organization of combat missions to correspond with the military capabilities of the machines; (2) able command of armored forces on the part of both the over-all command structure and the armored units themselves; (3) appropriate co-ordination with other types of weapons.

The Japanese command proved unable to use its armor for maneuver. Tanks were instead transferred to the group entrusted with the mission of pinning down the Red forces east of the Khalkhin-gol, thereby depriving the Japanese striking force of necessarily swift punching power.

#### Struggle for Foothold East of Khalkhin-gol

After their setback around Bain Tsagan Heights, the Japanese regrouped and resupplied their forces, in preparation for new attacks; but they feared to undertake deep encircling maneuvers in conjunction with river crossing operations. The Japanese consequently settled for a limited objective; i.e., to deprive the Soviet-Mongolian troops of their foothold on the eastern shores of the Khalkhin-gol. Frontal assaults were to be mounted in an effort to throw the Soviets and Mongolians to the western side of the river.

During the night of 6 July, in the sector of the 149th Infantry Regiment, the Japanese launched their first attack, which took the Soviet-Mongolian units by surprise. The units of the 149th Infantry Regiment were forced to retreat toward the Khalkhin-gol; at dawn, they dug themselves in around a hill located 3-4 kilometers from the river. During the ensuing battles, the courageous commander of the 149th Infantry Regiment, Maj. Remizov, was killed in action (8 July). For his gallantry in action, Maj. Remizov was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and the heights where his command post was located were renamed after him.

The Japanese continued to launch night attacks against various Soviet defensive sectors until 11 July, but they were all repulsed and the enemy could achieve no substantial success. On 11 July the Japanese struck with all of their strength, concentrating their main effort against Remizov Heights. Since they enjoyed considerable numerical superiority, the Japanese occupied the heights; but their further progress was halted by the heroic resistance of the Soviets and Outer Mongolians. Only one company of Japanese troops, which aimed at breaking through to the Khalkhin-gol river crossing, managed to penetrate the defenses, whereupon the Japanese sought to dig in upon a sand dune. Combined assaults by the infantrymen and armor of the Soviet 11th Tank Brigade wiped out this enemy force. The commanding officer of the brigade, Yakovlev, personally led the Soviet

attacks and died a hero's death in the course of the engagement.

The battle front lay still from the 13th to the 23th of July, while the Japanese prepared new and bigger offensives. When these preparations were discovered by the Soviet Command ahead of time, measures were taken to repulse the projected attacks. As early as 12 July, reinforcements were provided the Soviet-Mongolian units located on the eastern bank of the Khalkhin-gol. Col. Feduninski's 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment and the 5th Infantry Machine Gun Brigade were also brought up.

In the early morning of 23 July, the Japanese commenced heavy artillery fire against the forward edges of the Soviet-Mongol defenses and against the sites of the artillery positions. Friendly artillery held their fire in order not to disclose their positions. At 0900 hours, the Japanese struck along the southern sector in an effort to destroy the Soviet-Mongol forces and reach the river crossing. On the northern sector the Japanese simultaneously launched an artillery bombardment, following it up with a ground assault an hour and a half later. The failure of the Japanese to mount a concerted offensive along the entire front enabled the accurate Soviet artillery to hurl back the enemy attack first in the south, and then in the north.

On the 23d and 24th of July, the Japanese tried several times to storm the Soviet-Mongol defenses in both the southern and north-

ern sectors, but they were thrown back each time with severe casualties. The Soviet Air Force simultaneously struck at Japanese reserves being brought up in trucks some 20 or 30 kilometers behind the front. The powerful aerial strikes forced the Japanese to disperse, and they could not, therefore, enter the battle.

After a series of attacks which ended in heavy losses, the Japanese held up their offensive on 25 July and reverted to the defensive. During this period, the war in the air reached considerable proportions. In an effort to secure aerial mastery, the Japanese Army transferred its best pilots from China to the region of the Khalkhin-gol, but failed utterly. Soviet airmen continued to execute destructive strikes against the foe. In the period between 23 July and 4 August alone, 116 Japanese planes were destroyed.

Throughout July the Soviet-Mongol forces were numerically inferior to the Japanese, especially in terms of infantry, and the fighting was very difficult under the circumstances. Between separate Soviet-Mongol units or groupings, there were one or two kilometer gaps, weakly defended. The Japanese struck into these intervals during their frequent night attacks. In order to cope with the enemy assaults, it was necessary to shift entire units quickly from one sector to another, sometimes over great distances, and to throw them into battle immediately.

In spite of all the difficulties, the Soviet-Mongol forces

solved their problems. They did not allow the Japanese to reach the Khalkhin-gol, and they retained their foothold east of the river, thus ensuring an advantageous base for the subsequent, decisive Soviet-Mongol offensive.

#### August Offensive by Soviet-Mongol Army

After unsuccessful attempts to destroy the Soviet-Mongol forces in May and July, the Japanese High Command decided to call a temporary halt to their offensive operations and to dig in along a line of sand dunes five or six kilometers east of the Khalkhin-gol. While establishing a solid defensive system, the Japanese were simultaneously preparing for new offensives designed, as before, to occupy the eastern side of the Khalkhin-gol completely.

The problem facing the Soviet-Mongol command was the preparation and execution of decisive offensive operations envisaging the complete destruction of the Japanese aggressors who had trespassed into Outer Mongolian territory [as claimed by the Soviet side]. Previous combat experience indicated that the Soviet-Mongol troops and equipment then present at the front were insufficient to stage the contemplated operations. As a consequence, fresh forces had to be brought up from the interior:

82d Infantry Division

57th Infantry Division

152d Infantry Division (one regiment)



6th Tank Brigade

126th Artillery Regiment

85th Antiaircraft Regiment

Signal units

Separate tank companies

212th Airborne Brigade,<sup>14</sup> etc.

After transfer from the last railroad station (Borzya) to the locale of military operations, the new forces had to be concentrated at the battle front. To mass the units, motorized transportation was extensively employed: 720 trucks helped to transfer some 18,000 fresh troops.

The new units had to be intensively trained concerning the peculiarities of the zone of operations and the tactics of the Japanese Army. Major attention was devoted to training in close combat, bayonet charges, hand grenade assaults, night actions, camouflage, and digging in. All training was executed in conjunction with armor and artillery.

The First Army Corps was established from the forces assembled near the Khalkhin-gol. Command of the Corps lay in the hands of G. K. Zhukov (now Marshal). The Military Council (Sovvet) of the First Army Corps devised special plans in anticipation of the proj-

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14. Sometimes erroneously designated as an Artillery Brigade. The 212th Airborne appears to have fought exclusively as infantry at Nomonhan. - Ed.

ected offensive, based upon the following considerations: Concentration and regrouping of troops; transfer of forces across the Khalkhin-gol and occupation of final positions; subsequent troop activities; organization of mutual action; and Air Force preparations.

Within the planning and preparatory measures, special attention was paid to deception of the enemy--to give him the impression that friendly forces were going over to the defensive. Instructions entitled Reminders for the Soldier on the Defense were distributed among Soviet-Mongol personnel. False reports were broadcast, allegedly concerning defensive construction and requests for engineer equipment. All movements of troops were carried out only at night. The noise created by night bombers and by machine gun and rifle fire was used to drown out the rumble of armor being concentrated at jump-off positions. To mislead the Japanese about purported fortification of the central sector, a radio station was operated only on the center of the front. Powerful transmitters, newly arrived, emitted sound effects imitating the erection of poles and other alleged evidence of large-scale defensive construction. An effort was also made to accustom the Japanese to the sound of armor: Ten or twelve days prior to the projected offensive, a number of trucks were driven along the entire front with their mufflers off. As a result of the preceding measures, the Japanese Army Command was truly confused concerning the Soviet-Mongol plans.

Intelligence about the Japanese defensive system and unit deployment was obtained by night patrols and air reconnaissance flights. At the same time, a tremendous logistic effort had to be mounted, in order to handle the supply phase of the offensive operations. Prior to the attack, immense quantities of ammunition, fuel, provisions, etc. (totalling some 36,000 tons) had to be hauled overland for a distance of 780 kilometers. To handle the logistical requirements, some 5,000 trucks would have been required, but only 2,600 vehicles were available--and these were also tied up in the transportation of fresh troops. Nevertheless, it proved possible to amass the following stores prior to the offensive: Ammunition (all categories): combat factor of 6; tank ammunition: 9; fuel: as much as 5.

In the preparations for combat, considerable attention was devoted to the establishment of liaison and administration. At First Army Corps Headquarters a liaison section was set up, consisting of twelve officers with organic transportation. Contact between the section chief and the various unit commanders was ensured by the erection of a double-wire network.

The Soviet Air Force also carried out many preparatory measures. In addition to increasing the number of aircraft, steps were taken to extend the air strips in order to allow fighter planes to operate nearer to the front (as well as to facilitate safe landings). A special reconnaissance squadron was created, comprising fighters

under the direct control of the liaison section chief and located near his command post. Questions of tactical ground support were thoroughly investigated, and air commanders studied troop dispositions by personal inspection. Routine flights by Soviet aircraft, conducted day and night, served to confuse the Japanese; having become accustomed to these systematic sorties, the enemy did not particularly associate them with impending Soviet offensive operations.

The preparations were carried out so secretly that only a very limited number of Headquarters staff officers were acquainted with the plans. Unit commanders were alerted only three or four days before the attack was to start, while the troops themselves learned of the offensive the very evening before X-day.

A large amount of political indoctrination was conducted among the Soviet troops in order to ensure high offensive esprit. All officers and men were accordingly inspired with the single desire of teaching a decisive lesson to the Japanese samurais who had violated the territory of the friendly Outer Mongol people.

#### Situation Prior to 20 August 1939

Before the commencement of the Soviet-Mongol offensive, the Japanese Army had concentrated the following forces in the area of military operations:

15  
7th and 23d Infantry Divisions (full wartime organization)

One Manchurian Mixed Infantry Brigade  
16

3th Border Garrison Unit

Three heavy artillery regiments

Three regiments of Bargut [Inner Mongol] Cavalry

In addition, the Japanese were moving up the 14th Infantry Brigade [7th Infantry Division] from the interior of Manchuria. To strengthen their antitank defenses, the Japanese also transferred to the region of the Khalkhin-gol all of the antitank batteries of the 1st Infantry Division plus a portion of Port Arthur Fortress's heavy artillery.<sup>17</sup> During August the Japanese Air Force was considerably reinforced, in the locale of combat, by the concentration of as many as 450 planes transferred from the China theater and from Japan itself.

The Japanese occupied fortified positions along the sandy hills west of the state frontier of Outer Mongolia [according to the Soviet contention]. The forward edge of these defenses extended along the southern side of the "great sands," thence along the southern and southwestern slopes of Green Heights [Noro Heights sector]

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15. Actually 14th Brigade Headquarters and 28th Infantry Regiment. - Ed.

16. Only the Hasebe Infantry Regiment actually participated in combat. - Ed.

17. Cp. Note 3, above. - Ed.

and the western face of the sandy range four kilometers east of Dunggur Obo. From there the Japanese line crossed the Holsten River some four to six kilometers from its mouth, and stretched to the north along the western slopes of Fui (or "Finger") Heights [sic]. The right flank was anchored on the Outer Mongol state frontier in the vicinity of Lake Odon-nur.

The Japanese main line of resistance was occupied, south of the Holsten River, by left flank units made up of the 71st and 28th Infantry Regiments. North of the Holsten were stationed the 72d, 64th, and 26th Infantry Regiments. Fui Heights was held by Ioki's reconnaissance unit of the 23d Infantry Division plus the 2d Company of the 26th Infantry Regiment. The 25th and 26th Infantry Regiments constituted the immediate reserves, but the Japanese had concentrated additional reserve forces north of Lake Yankhu, in the region of Nomonhan Burd-obo, Djindjin-sume, and Depden-sume. The flanks of the Japanese defensive positions were secured by Bargut cavalymen.

The Japanese defensive lines consisted of resistance and support "knots" dug into the hills and interconnected by passages. The trenches were deep and the camouflaged forts could withstand bursts by 152-mm. projectiles. Deep shelters had been made for both motor vehicles and horses. The Japanese powerfully fortified the following elevations in particular: Sandy, Green, Remizov, and Fui Heights. Well adapted to the terrain, the entire Japanese fortification system

was laid out in accordance with a carefully conceived fire plan and constituted a solid defensive belt. The commanding general of the 23d Infantry Division (Lt. Gen. Komatsubara) was in over-all command of the Japanese-Manchurian forces.

On 7-8 August the Soviet-Mongol troops undertook an operation designed to improve their tactical situation. They then held a foothold three to five kilometers east of the Khalkhin-gol. As of 18 August, the following forces were stationed on the eastern shores:

8th Cavalry Division, Outer Mongolian Army

82d Infantry Division (less one regiment)

5th Infantry Machine Gun Brigade

36th Motorized Infantry Division (two regiments)

6th Cavalry Division, Outer Mongolian Army

The remainder of the Soviet-Mongol forces remained on the west bank of the Khalkhin-gol and only started to cross the river during the night of 18 August; that is, 24 hours prior to the jump-off time for the combined offensive. The river crossing operation and the subsequent movements on the eastern shores were conducted without enemy interruption; due to intensive preparations, they were not even noticed by the Japanese. The 6th Tank Brigade, however, which was supposed to cross the river at a previously designated site, was slightly delayed in the process. Rains and a rising water level necessitated the diversion of the Brigade to the river crossing assigned to the 57th Infantry Division, although the latter site was not

well-adapted to tank fording.

By dawn on 20 August, all of the Soviet-Mongol forces (with the exception of the 6th Tank Brigade) were east of the Khalkhin-gol, in the following order:

8th Cavalry Division, Outer Mongol Army-- along border west of Eris Ulin-obo and Hulat Ulin-obo.

8th Armored Brigade--concentrated in area south of "Great Sands."

57th Infantry Division (80th, 127th, and 293d Infantry Regiments) occupied front south of "Small Sands" and Green Heights.

82d Infantry Division (603d and 602d Infantry Regiments)--southwest of sandy heights in area between Nuren-obo and Dungur-obo, with its right flank adjacent to 57th Infantry Division and its left flank adjacent to Holsten River.

5th Infantry Brigade--occupied area on northern bank of Holsten, northeast of mouth of that river.

36th Motorized Infantry Division (149th and 24th Regiments)--deployed west of Remizov Heights, two to three kilometers east of the Khalkhin-gol.

7th Armored Brigade and 601st Regiment, 82d Infantry Division--concentrated eight kilometers northeast of site marked "Ruins," on east bank of Khalkhin-gol.

6th Cavalry Division, Outer Mongol Army--stationed on left flank.

All in all, the frontage of the Soviet-Mongol forces extended for 74 kilometers. The 7th Armored Brigade, the 601st Infantry Regiment, and the 6th Cavalry Division faced east, while the right-flank



units (8th Armored Brigade and 57th Infantry Division) faced north. The 6th Tank Brigade, then moving to the southern sector, was still deployed around the river crossing site. The Commanding General of the First Army Corps possessed the following reserves in the region southwest of the Hamardaba range: 9th Armored Brigade, 6th Tank Brigade (4th Battalion), and 212th Airborne Brigade.

A comparison between the strengths of the opposing forces indicates that superiority lay with the Soviet-Mongol troops.<sup>18</sup> The ratios in favor of the Red side may be expressed as follows:

Infantry--1.5:1

Cavalry--not significant

Machine guns--1.7:1

Artillery--almost 2:1

<sup>19</sup>  
Tanks--4:1

Aircraft (especially fighters)--[unspecified]  
Soviet supremacy

20

#### Operational Plan of Soviet-Mongol Command

After engaging the enemy frontally, it was the intention of the Soviet-Mongol Army Command to surround and destroy Japanese forces

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18. See Table 22, Book C, Part 3 of the present study. - Ed.

19. Since the Japanese did not choose to commit armor during August, the Soviet-Mongol side possessed absolute superiority in terms of tanks and armored cars.

20. See Map No. 25, ibid. - Ed.

between the state frontier and the Khalkhin-gol, by striking with powerful elements against both flanks. Three groupings were accordingly organized to execute the plan:

Southern Force (Commanded by  
Col. Potapov) : 57th Infantry Division  
8th Cavalry Division  
(Outer Mongol)  
8th Armored Brigade  
6th Tank Brigade (less 1 bn)  
11th Tank Brigade  
(less 2 bns)  
185th Artillery Regiment  
(1 bn)  
37th Antitank Battalion  
Tank Company (T-130)

Northern Force (Commanded by  
Col. Olekseenko) : 601st Infantry Regiment,  
82d Infantry Division  
6th Cavalry Division  
(Outer Mongol)  
7th Armored Brigade  
Two tank battalions, 11th  
Tank Brigade  
82d Artillery Regiment  
(Howitzer)  
87th Antitank Battalion

Central Force (under direct control of Command-  
ing General, First  
Army Group) : 82d Infantry Division (less  
601st Infantry Regiment)  
36th Motorized Infantry Division  
5th Infantry Machine Gun  
Brigade

Operating on the middle of the battle front, between the two striking forces which were to encircle the enemy's flanks, the Central Force was to pin down the main Japanese strength by frontal

assaults, so that the enemy could not shift forces toward either flank.

In accordance with the First Army Group Commander's order dated 17 August the Southern Force was to attack in the direction of Nomon-han Burd-obo. In concert with the Central and the Northern forces, the Southern Force was then to surround and annihilate enemy elements south and north of the Holsten River.

The immediate objective of the Southern Force was the destruction of Japanese units south of the Holsten, and the occupation of the southern shores of that river. The Southern Force was later to move northward and, in co-ordination with the Northern Force, it was to encircle and annihilate enemy groupings north of the Holsten. Enemy reserves were to be attacked and destroyed upon their appearance. Operations by the Southern Force were to be covered on the right flank by the Outer Mongolian 8th Cavalry Division, which was ordered to secure and retain the heights at Eris Ulin-obo and Hulat Ulin-obo.

In the Central Force, the 82d Infantry Division was ordered to strike the enemy in the area of Nuren-obo and the Holsten River, by executing the main blow with its right flank. In co-operation with the 57th Infantry Division, the mission of the 82d was to destroy the southern portion of the Japanese forces.

Also within the Central Force, the 36th Motorized Infantry Division plus the 5th Infantry Brigade were to engage the enemy around the Holsten River east of Bain Tsagan Heights, by striking with their left flank elements. The objective was the encirclement and annihilation of enemy forces north of the Holsten, in concert with units of the Northern Force and of the 82d Infantry Division.

The Northern Force was meanwhile ordered to occupy a jump-off line eight kilometers northeast of the Ruins site and to push forward in the direction of the lakes six kilometers northwest of Nomonhan Burd-obo. Together with the 36th Motorized Infantry Division and the Southern Force, the Northern Force was then to surround and wipe out enemy forces north of the Holsten River. The initial objective was the occupation of the sand hills four kilometers northwest of Nomonhan. The advance of the Northern Force was to be covered from the north by the Outer Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division, which was ordered to secure and defend the region west of Lake Yankhu.

By morning on 20 August, the First Army Group's reserves were to concentrate in the district six kilometers southwest of the Hamardaba Range, in order to be ready to exploit successes achieved by the Southern or the Northern Force.

Artillery support for the Soviet-Mongol offensive was to be rendered by the following groupings:

57th Infantry Division Support Units: 57th Artillery Regiment and 57th Howitzer Regiment.

82d Infantry Division Support Units: 82d Artillery Regiment and 5th Infantry Brigade artillery group.

36th Motorized Infantry Division Support Units: 175th Artillery Regiment.

Northern Force Support Units: 82d Howitzer Regiment.

The problems of artillery support for the infantry revolved about the destruction or neutralization of the enemy's firing capability in the forward areas; defense in depth along the axes of the advancing infantry divisions; and accompaniment by fire of the attacks waged by infantry and armor. Each artillery group headquarters for infantry support was ordered to designate, ahead of time, those batteries which were to move up immediately behind the infantry.

In addition to infantry-support artillery formations, long-range artillery groups were set up. For the southern striking force, the long-range artillery support consisted of elements of the 185th Artillery Regiment. For the central striking force, similar long-range artillery support was to be furnished by elements of the 175th Artillery Regiment and by a separate battery of long-range 122-mm. guns.

Additional missions of the long-range artillery forces included

the neutralization of enemy artillery in the areas north and south of the Holsten; pinning down of enemy reserves around Nomonhan and the sand hills seven kilometers southeast of the Holsten; and the prevention of reinforcement from the regions of Djindjin-sume and Nomonhan Burd-obo.

Artillery fire was to commence upon receipt of special instructions. The duration of fire was calculated at two hours and forty-five minutes, but during the last quarter-hour it was planned to concentrate the fire of all guns against the forward edges of the Japanese defensive positions.

Prior to being softened up by artillery, the enemy was to be pounded by concerted, mighty strikes executed by swift bomber aircraft, with the object of destroying manpower and materiel. Before the actual commencement of the ground offensive, another aerial assault was planned, against artillery sites and troop concentrations. From 0930 hours on 20 August, the Soviet Air Force was to be ready for action against enemy reserves, to prevent their entry onto the field of battle. Fighter aircraft were ordered to provide escort for swift bombers as well as close protection for ground troops; to conduct reconnaissance missions; and to be prepared to strike with concerted strength against approaching Japanese reserves.

The jump-off day for the combined offensive was set for 20 August. All matters dealing with the preparation and execution of the

offensive, as well as with co-ordination between all arms, were thoroughly studied at the time of the reconnaissance of the locale. Only afterwards were special staff papers and planning factors, etc., devised. Prior to the attack, the Military Council checked upon the implementation of its directions and corrected all shortcomings on the spot.

### Japanese Plans

After the failure of their July offensive, the Japanese temporarily abandoned large-scale offensive operations. The Kwantung Army Command ordered its troops operating in Outer Mongolian territory to establish a solid system of defenses along the eastern side of the Khalkhin-gol, while simultaneously preparing for new offensive action.

In accordance with an Imperial order, the Sixth Army was activated by the Japanese on 10 August, with the mission of destroying Soviet-Mongol forces in Outer Mongolian territory. Along the entire front the Japanese constructed defenses while readying a general offensive. The plan of the Japanese Command was to lure the Soviet-Mongol forces into the valley of the Holsten River; to mass great striking power in the "Great Sands" area southeast of Nomonhan; and to smash the right flank opposing them. Scheduled for 24 August, the Japanese general offensive never materialized. The Soviets and Outer Mongolians instead forestalled the Japanese by launching a decisive offensive of their own on 20 August.

### Conduct of Operations

The character of the military operations and problems handled by the Soviet-Mongol forces in the course of their offensive facilitates division of the period into three phases: 20-23 August; 24-27 August; and 28-31 August.

#### Combat Operations, 20-23 August

On the morning of 20 August the First Army Corps launched a concerted offensive along the entire battle front. At 0545 hours, several hundred Soviet bombers executed powerful strikes against the forward edges of the Japanese defenses, as well as against reserve forces and artillery sites. The fire of Soviet-Mongol artillery silenced the enemy's antiaircraft batteries, while the aerial assaults left fires burning in the enemy's rear.

Following the air strikes, heavy artillery concentrations began. Fifteen minutes before the ground troops jumped off, the air force struck a second time, after which all the artillery hurled a storm of fire against the forward positions of the Japanese.

The morning fog allowed the Soviet-Mongol infantrymen to occupy jump-off positions in secret, and even to close with the enemy directly at certain places. The full-scale offensive jumped off at 0900 hours, and achieved such a degree of surprise that not one Japanese artillery piece replied during the first hour and a quarter of the attack.



On the first day the greatest successes were achieved by the Southern Force. The Outer Mongol 8th Cavalry Division threw back small elements of Bargut cavalry in front of Eris Ulyn-obo and Khat Ulyn-obo heights, but the Division moved no farther because it had reached the state frontier [as claimed by the Soviets]. In the same area, on 21 August, about 250 armed Barguts and Manchus deserted to the Soviet side. During subsequent operations, the 8th Cavalry Division continued to occupy territory protecting the right flank and later the rear of the Southern Force.

The 57th Infantry Division launched its offensive in two waves. The 127th and 293d Infantry Regiments struck first. The 80th Infantry Regiment was in the second wave, with the assignment of operating along the right flank of the 127th Infantry Regiment, in the direction of Great Sands.

By the end of the first day of the offensive, the 57th Infantry Division had managed to overcome stubborn resistance and, together with the right flank elements, had moved a total of about 12 kilometers to reach its nearest objective. The 80th Infantry Regiment got to the northern fringe of Great Sands by 1900 hours. Meanwhile the 127th Infantry Regiment had penetrated northeastward in the direction of Hill 757, while the 293d Infantry Regiment destroyed hostile covering forces and drove forward to the enemy's front-line defenses. Repeated assaults undertaken by the 293d Re-

giment against the forward edges of the main Japanese defensive positions were nevertheless repulsed throughout the day. Small enemy elements still remained inside the four-kilometer gap formed between the 80th and 127th Infantry Regiments; on 21 August the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 57th Infantry Division was sent in to plug this breach.

Overcoming a line of sandy hills with difficulty, the 8th Armored Brigade reached an area three or four kilometers southwest of Nomonhan Burd-obo by the end of 20 August. Reconnaissance elements drove as far as the state frontier southeast of Nomonhan. The 6th Armored Brigade did not participate in any of these battles because it was late in reaching the designated jump-off zone.

The Central Force moved forward only very slightly during the first day of the offensive. In the face of powerful Japanese defensive positions around Sandy and Green Heights, the 82d Infantry Division waged a stubborn fire fight throughout the day. By the end of 20 August the Division had moved up its flanks only 500 to 1,500 meters; the immediate objectives--Sandy and Green Heights-- could not be taken.

The main strike along the left flank was conducted by the 36th Motorized Infantry Division, advancing together with the 5th Infantry Machine Gun Brigade. The 149th Infantry Regiment and the 5th Brigade pinned down the foe, while simultaneously the 24th Motorized

Infantry Regiment, reinforced by a tank battalion from the 57th Infantry Division, moved forward successfully, destroying the front-line fire points of the Japanese. Toward the end of the day, the advancing forces reached the enemy's strong points on Sandy Heights. Under intense enemy fire, the 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment was obliged to hold up and dig itself in, as darkness was falling.

The Northern Force drove hard and hurled two regiments of Bargut cavalry back across the state frontier. On 20 August the Soviets occupied the enemy's forwardmost positions and penetrated directly to the strong enemy defenses located in the vicinity of Fui Heights, but an attempt to seize this strong point failed at the time. The Northern Force was thereupon compelled to commit its main strength, and fierce combat ensued; but the enemy put up strong resistance and threw back all assaults mounted by elements of the Northern Force.

With the coming of darkness, the Japanese Command felt threatened on its flanks and began to regroup. The commander of the Japanese 23d Infantry Division, Lt. Gen. Komatsubara, judged that the major effort of the Soviet-Mongol forces was being launched against the Japanese right flank. (In reality, the main offensive was being conducted by the Southern Force against the Japanese left flank). To check the advance of the Northern Force, the Japanese Command took steps to bolster its defenses in the area of Fui Heights. For this purpose, the 26th Infantry Regiment was transferred to the locale, with its frontage facing northward.

The northern detachment of the Japanese forces received simultaneous orders to secure the region west of Lake Yankhu, employing a portion of its strength, while the main body covered the rear and right flank. The Japanese Command deemed its central forces to be most dependable. The 72d Infantry Regiment was accordingly pulled out for assignment to the reserve grouping, whence it was to be committed for defense of the flanks.

Following up the successes achieved during the first day of the offensive, the Soviet-Mongol troops subsequently waged stubborn combat within the defensive system of the Japanese. In the Southern Force's zone, the 6th Tank and 8th Armored brigades by-passed the enemy's flank and overcame terrain obstacles with great difficulty until they had occupied the region of Great Sands by the end of 21 August. Thus, within only two days of offensive operations, Soviet-Mongol mechanized units had penetrated to the eastward escape routes of the Japanese southern forces.

On 22 August, Southern Force infantry units forced a deep wedge into the primary defenses of the foe, wiped out his tactical reserves, and occupied a number of artillery positions. Striking swiftly, the Soviet troops split the Japanese lines into a number of unconnected points, then sealed them off and destroyed them piecemeal. Artillery and flame-throwing tanks played an important part in the attacks upon knots of resistance, which had to be taken frontally.

Guns of all calibers (including 152-mm.) were moved up to open sites from which they blasted enemy firing points at short range. Flame-throwing armor burned out the bunkers and underground works, whereupon infantry finished the job of exterminating the Japanese with hand grenades and bayonets. Especially formidable resistance was put up by two strong points located approximately 5 kilometers south of the Holsten River. Elements of the 57th Infantry Division encircled these knots and wiped out the Japanese troops with the assistance of flame-throwing tanks.

By the end of 23 August the entire defensive system of the Japanese had been broken by the offensive of the Southern Force. Only one defensive pocket (in the vicinity of Hill 757) remained in Japanese hands. The 8th Armored Brigade had meanwhile moved up to the state frontier southeast of Nomonhan Burd-obo, occupied positions facing northeastward, and completely cut off the avenues of escape of the Japanese southern forces. In the sector of the Central Force the advances made by elements of the 82d and 36th Infantry Divisions were negligible. The enemy continued to wage stubborn resistance at the approaches to Sandy and Remizov Heights.

The Northern Force could not take Fui Heights on either the 21st or 22d of August. Instead of pinning the Japanese on the heights with a portion of his forces and continuing to drive swiftly southward with his main strength, the Northern Force Commander kept up a

series of unsuccessful assaults. Resisting fiercely, the Japanese brought up a portion of their reserves to Fui Heights and succeeded in holding up the advance of the Northern Force.

On 21 August the commander of the First Army Corps had already ordered the 9th Armored Brigade to be pulled out of reserve and committed to the support of the Northern Force. The Brigade was given the mission of advancing along the frontier from the north toward Nomonhan Burd-obo, without delaying at Fui Heights, in order to intercept the enemy's escape routes and destroy his supplies around Lake Uzur Nur. Reinforced by a tank battalion from the 6th Tank Brigade, the 9th Armored Brigade proceeded to execute its mission, by-passing Fui Heights from the east and moving along the state boundary. On 22 August, elements of this striking force attacked the Japanese base near Lake Uzur Nur. Soviet tanks destroyed the enemy's motorized column, set fire to fuel and ammunition stores, and knocked out a gun battery defending the base. Destruction of the logistical facilities disorganized the supply system of the Japanese and Manchukuoan forces.

Fierce combat continued to rage at Fui Heights. Powerful fortifications covered the heights on all sides. Barbed wire overlay deep, sheltered bunkers which were linked by connecting trenches dug at wide intervals. Encircled on all sides, the Japanese defenders threw back every assault hurled at them. Only toward the

end of 23 August were elements of the Northern Force (reinforced by the 212th Airborne Brigade) able to overcome the enemy's resistance. No Japanese would give up and it was consequently necessary to force the foe from every cranny with grenades and bayonets. After the struggle was over, the bodies of more than 600 Japanese officers and men were extricated from the trenches and bunkers.

After securing Fui Heights the Northern Force continued its offensive toward the southeast. Meanwhile the 9th Armored Brigade (reinforced by two companies of truck-borne frontier guards and by an infantry machine gun battalion from the 11th Tank Brigade) reached Nomonhan Burd-obo on 23 August. The eastward escape route of the Japanese northern forces was thereby cut off. On 24 August, the 9th Brigade made contact with elements of the Southern Force's 8th Armored Brigade, and a ring was closed around the foe.

During the entire first phase of the Soviet-Mongol offensive, the Soviet Air Force rendered intensive support to the ground units. On one day alone--21 August--Soviet bomber aircraft made 256 sorties in the vicinities of Lake Uzur Nur, Nomonhan Burd-obo, Djindjin Sume, Lake Yankhu, Kanchuerhmiao, and the railroad connecting Arshaan and Kanchuerhmiao. A total of more than 86,000 kilograms of bombs were dropped.

Thus, by the end of the very first stage of the offensive, Soviet-Mongol mobile forces had already completed the encirclement of

the enemy. In close co-operation with armor and aircraft, the infantry had broken through the forwardmost Japanese positions and had split up the entire defensive system. Isolated Japanese strong points lost contact with each other and were wiped out by the attacking troops.

#### Combat Operations, 24-27 August

Three strong points of Japanese resistance still remained on 24 August. The first nest was located on the northern shores of the Holsten River; the second and third, on the south side near Sandy and Green Heights. In an order issued on 24 August the First Army Corps Commander gave his troops the mission of annihilating the remnants of the Japanese forces on the southern part of the front, and of establishing positions from which to attack and destroy enemy troops north of the Holsten. To effect the mission, the commander of the Southern Force was ordered to co-ordinate the activities of the 57th and 82d Infantry Divisions. While covering themselves on the east with the 30th Infantry Regiment, the 8th Armored Brigade, and the Outer Mongolian 8th Cavalry Division, the Southern Force units were to storm and annihilate all Japanese units south of the Holsten River.

By the end of 24 August, the Southern Force was to have "paved the way" for the 57th Infantry Division and the 603d Regiment of the 82d Infantry Division to reach the northern bank of the Holsten.



During the same day, the 36th Motorized Infantry Division was to get ready for an attack on 25 August against the northern group of Japanese, having meanwhile co-ordinated its actions with neighboring elements of the Northern and Southern Forces.

The Northern Force was ordered to advance to the vicinity of "Distant Sands" and to ready itself for assaulting the northern group of Japanese, while establishing direct contact with the left flank of the 36th Motorized Infantry Division and with the right flank of the 9th Armored Brigade.

In sum, the idea in the mind of the First Army Corps Commander was to compress the encircled enemy within a solid ring and to smash him with a series of concentrated blows--first on the south side of the Holsten and next on the north side. All the while, the actions of the main group would be covered by elements from outside the scene of local battle.

Throughout 24 August the 57th Infantry Division successfully continued to mop up remnants of the Japanese support points. By the end of the day the 127th Infantry Regiment had already driven directly to the southern shore of the Holsten River, making contact on its right flank with the 8th Armored Brigade. The 293d Infantry Regiment meanwhile continued its own successful advance to the north.

On the central sector, however, elements of the 82d Infantry

Division were unable to achieve their objectives. The Japanese had pulled their remnants together from the southern side of the Holsten River to the vicinity of Sandy and Green Heights, and now resisted with their surviving fire power. In the sector of the Northern Force, the 9th Armored Brigade successfully engaged the foe and solidly secured the vicinity of Nomonhan Burd-obo.

To break the encircling ring and to relieve the surrounded forces, the Japanese Army Command undertook an attack on 24 August, using two regiments of the 14th Infantry Brigade (which had come up from the east) in the area southeast of Nomonhan. The centripetal attack appeared to be aimed against the 80th Infantry Regiment, which was conducting defensive operations along the northeastern slopes of the Great Sands. The Soviet regiment resisted all assaults stubbornly and inflicted sizeable losses upon the enemy.

On 25 August the Japanese mounted another offensive, striking at the juncture between the 80th Infantry Regiment's line battalions. A massive aerial effort accompanied the ground offensive, as the enemy strained every effort to free his surrounded forces. The Japanese failed this time also. To the assistance of the 80th Infantry Regiment came reserve troops--the 6th Tank Brigade and the 1st Regiment of the 152d Infantry Division.

On 26 August, the Southern Force Commander determined to counterattack the assaulting Japanese in order to crush their efforts

to free their surrounded forces, once and for all. This mission was assigned to the 6th Tank Brigade, whose armor was to deal a two-pronged blow simultaneously, from behind the flanks of the 80th Infantry Regiment, as soon as the attacking Japanese approached the Soviet positions.

When the left force of the 6th Tank Brigade struck, the enemy managed to check the advance with intensive artillery fire. The right force of the Brigade took the Japanese by surprise, however, when it went over to the offensive shortly afterwards. The anti-tank fire power of the enemy was swiftly eliminated, and more than two Japanese companies were overrun by the action of gunfire and tracked vehicles.

The Japanese suffered severe losses in the course of the three days of combat and were finally demoralized by armored thrusts. After 26 August the enemy abandoned offensive action. By the end of that day, Soviet infantry units of the Southern and Northern Forces had further compressed the encircling ring around the enemy, whose eastward escape routes were now entirely cut off.

The Soviet Air Force meanwhile effectively blocked any approach to the battlefield by fresh reserves of the enemy. On 24 and 25 August alone, Soviet bombers undertook 218 massive sorties. Some 96,000 kilograms of bombs were dropped on targets at Nomonhan Burdobo, Lake Uzur-nur, Arshaan, Djindjin Sume, and Nufintay. Soviet

fighters struck ten times, destroying 74 Japanese aircraft between the 24th and 27th of August.

Within the pocket, fierce battles continued to rage. Still hoping to receive promised reinforcements, the encircled foe resisted furiously. By 27 August, elements of the 57th and 82d Infantry Divisions had further compressed the encircling ring and had completely sealed off the Japanese remnants entrenched in the vicinity of Sandy and Green Heights.

On the northern bank of the Holsten River, Soviet-Mongol forces simultaneously launched intensive assaults against Remizov Heights from three sides. From the west and southwest the 24th and 149th Infantry Regiments of the 36th Motorized Infantry Division struck, together with the 5th Infantry Machine Gun Brigade. From the north advanced the 601st Infantry Regiment of the 82d Infantry Division, and from the east, the 9th Armored Brigade. On the side of the state frontier, cover was provided by an infantry machine gun battalion of the 11th Tank Brigade, by two companies of frontier guards, and by the 212th Airborne Brigade.

The commander of the First Army Corps ordered his troops, on 27 August, to annihilate the surrounded Japanese. In conjunction with the 36th Motorized Infantry Division, elements of the Northern Force were ordered to occupy initial objectives not farther than 700 to 1,000 meters from the foot of Remizov Heights. After an intensive

three-hour artillery preparation, these forces were to launch an attack against the Japanese dug in on the heights. After commencing the offensive at 1000 hours, the Southern Force was to wipe out enemy troops in the area of Sandy and Green Heights, in co-operation with the 602d and 603d Regiments of the 82d Infantry Division.

The Japanese had not been able to pierce the encirclement and had lost all hope of relief from the outside. Nevertheless, the enemy made another attempt to break out on 27 August, prior to the general offensive staged by the Soviets and Outer Mongols. At daybreak a disorganized group of Japanese, in battalion strength, began striking eastward along the valley on the southern shores of the Holsten River. The enemy was taken under heavy artillery fire and was later attacked by a reconnaissance company and one of the infantry companies of the 127th Infantry Regiment, which had occupied positions directly on the south bank. Part of the Japanese forces were wiped out forthwith; the remnants were driven back to the north shore, where they were pounded by the 9th Armored Brigade and were annihilated.

At about 1100 hours, another Japanese group--numbering about a battalion, with 75-mm. gun batteries and several machine guns--attempted to break out eastward along the south side of the Holsten. They too were engaged and annihilated by elements of the 57th Infantry Division.

On the same day, at 1700 hours, a large group of Japanese officers and noncoms sought to escape from the encircling vise, which was being progressively tightened. Determined attacks by Soviet forces destroyed the enemy elements in the vicinity of the Holsten River crossing.

The Soviets and Outer Mongolians had by now wiped out almost all of the Japanese garrison dug in on Sandy and Green Heights, in the course of enemy attempts to break out of the encirclement. By the end of 27 August, units of the 57th and 82d Infantry Divisions had secured all of the fortifications south of the Holsten, while the 127th Infantry Regiment had crossed to the northern shore. As of the morning of 28 August, Japanese remained only in the northern sector, around Remizov Heights. Here the Japanese had prepared their most powerful defenses and had been able to cling to the heights throughout 27 August.

In summary, from the 24th through the 27th of August the troops of the First Army Corps not only repulsed all attacks by enemy forces attempting to break the encirclement but also mounted a powerful counteroffensive themselves. The surrounded enemy was thus eventually annihilated. Elements of the Soviet Southern Force, together with the regiments of the 82d Infantry Division, successfully accomplished the objective of extinguishing the last flames of Japanese resistance south of the Holsten River. Now the Soviet-Mongol troops were to be employed in a blow from the south against pockets of resistance in the region of Remizov Heights.

Combat Operations, 28-31 August 1939

On 28 August the struggle to eliminate the last pockets of resistance on Remizov Heights unfolded. The Japanese garrison which was still holding out on the heights was completely encircled when the 127th and afterwards the 293d Infantry Regiment of the 57th Infantry Division crossed to the northern banks of the Holsten River. The encircling ring grew smaller constantly, while Soviet artillery and armor knocked out almost the last Japanese field piece. The surviving fire power of the foe now consisted primarily of mortars and machine guns.

During the night of 28 August a portion of the enemy forces tried to break out of the trap. A group of some 400 Japanese had assembled on the dunes, intending to penetrate eastward along the northern shores of the Holsten by stealth. The force was detected, however, whereupon the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 293d Infantry Regiment set about exterminating the enemy. Caught crossing the river, the Japanese were attacked and annihilated in fierce hand-to-hand combat after they refused to surrender.

On the evening of 28 August the commander of the 24th Motorized Infantry Regiment received direct orders from the First Army Corps Commander to wipe out Japanese forces dug in on Remizov Heights. The crest of the heights was to be seized no later than midnight. In accordance with the orders, the regiment stormed the

high ground from the north with the support of armor. By 2300 hours the crest-line positions were penetrated and the backbone of Japanese resistance was broken. Throughout the rest of the night [28/29 August], small and scattered remnants of the foe were mopped up on Remizov Heights.

During the ensuing two days, Soviet forces cleared the area of the last pockets of routed Japanese. By the morning of 31 August the territory of the Outer Mongolians was completely cleared of Japanese invaders. The Soviets and the Outer Mongols thereupon set about establishing the defense of the state frontier.

The war in the air raged during the latest phase of operations. Four times, between the 28th and 31st of August, the Soviet Air Force fought aerial battles with the Japanese. During the most violent encounter, on 31 August, 126 Soviet fighters took off to meet an air attack upon friendly infantry positions, involving 27 Japanese bombers and 70 fighters. In this particular battle, the Japanese lost 22 planes, while in the whole period between the 28th and 31st of August they lost a total of 45 fighters and four bombers.

Despite their expulsion from the territory lying between the Khalkhin-gol and the [alleged] state frontier of Outer Mongolia, the Japanese made a new effort to encroach upon the Soviet-allied Mongol Republic. With fresh troops drawn from their 2d Infantry Division, the Japanese threw two battalions against the heights at Eris Ulynobo, on 4 September. Soviet troops pulled from the Southern Force's



reserves counterattacked and drove back the enemy; on the field of battle the Japanese abandoned 350 casualties. In the same area, on the night of 8 September, the Japanese attempted another attack, using four infantry companies, but they were again repulsed with severe losses.

After the Japanese ground forces had been smashed, the aerial campaign reached a peak of intensity, with the Soviet Air Force engaging in six air battles during the first half of September. The most severe encounter took place on 15 September, when the Japanese massed all of their aerial strength in an effort to strike a massive blow at Soviet air bases and thereby regain supremacy of the air. In this decisive battle 120 Japanese fighters clashed with 207 Soviet planes. The former lost 20 aircraft; the latter, six.

The number of aircraft lost by the Japanese during the September sky battles totalled about 70, whereas the Soviets lost 14. Thus the last Japanese attempt to wrest aerial supremacy from the Soviet Air Force ended in utter defeat.

Shattered on the ground and in the air, the Japanese asked the Soviet Government to terminate military operations. Action finally ended on 16 September 1939.

### Combat Results

The Soviet-Mongol offensive of August 1939 ended brilliantly. In the course of ten days a large part of the strength of the Japanese Sixth Army was surrounded and completely wiped out. The enemy suffered tremendous losses; on the field of battle lay thousands of bodies and vast amounts of equipment. During July and August, the Japanese lost 18,868 dead and 25,900 wounded. The grand total of Japanese casualties incurred between May and September reached 52,000 to 55,000 officers and men, including no less than 25,000 killed. The Soviet-Mongol side lost 9,284 men.

In the August offensive alone, Soviet-Mongol forces captured the following materiel, among other items:

Field pieces	175	(includes 30 heavy guns)
Machine guns	340	
Rifles	12,000	
Projectiles	42,000	
Cartridges	2,000,000	(aprx)

During combat between May and September, the Japanese lost 660 aircraft, of which 204 were shot down in air battles between 20-30 August alone.

After the Soviet Army repulsed the invaders at the Khalkhin-gol, the Japanese did not again attempt to encroach openly upon the territories of the Soviet Far East or of friendly Outer Mongolia. The plans of international imperialistic reactionaries to drag the U.S.S.R. into conflict with Japan were thus unmasked, as they were

in the West too; for, in the autumn of 1939, the very opponents of collective security—England and France—were drawn into war [with Germany].

The defeat of the Japanese Sixth Army by Soviet-Mogol troops at the Khalkhin-gol exerted an inspiring effect upon the struggle for national liberation of the Chinese and Korean peoples against Japanese imperialism. The rebuff to the Japanese invaders was intensified by the actions of the Chinese [Communist] Army.

Another effect of the crushing debacle suffered by the Japanese at the Khalkhin-gol was manifested in the behavior of Nippon during the Great Fatherland [Russo-German] War of 1941-45. The Japanese imperialists never abandoned hope of seizing Soviet territory and, after the Nazi German invasion of Russia, reinforced the Kwantung Army in Manchuria—despite the Russo-Japanese Neutrality Pact of April 1941. Meanwhile the Japanese press unleashed violent anti-Soviet propaganda and appealed for an invasion of Siberia. The German-Fascist armies, however, did not achieve their objective of seizing Moscow and overcoming the U.S.S.R. before the advent of winter, although they suffered terrific losses on the Russo-German battle front.

In the autumn of 1941 Japan refrained from launching an open armed attack upon the Soviet Union, the insistent demands of Nazi Germany notwithstanding. Ott, the German Ambassador to Tokyo, trans-

mitted a telegram to Berlin in which he explained the hesitation of Japan by stating that the entire Japanese Army still remembered the Khalkhin-gol. After the rout of the Nazi troops in front of Stalin-grad and Kursk, Japan refrained from marching against the Soviet Union in 1942-43, for the defeat of the Japanese at the Khalkhin-gol had discouraged them from measuring strength with the Soviet Army.

### Conclusions

The August offensive of the Soviets and Outer Mongolians at the Khalkhin-gol is an example of the organization and successful execution of the encirclement of an enemy, by the utilization of advanced military technology. The experience of the combat at the Khalkhin-gol, subsequently reinforced on a larger scale in the course of the Russo-German War of 1941-45, revealed the tremendous potentialities for maneuver on the part of armor and aviation. During complex operations designed to encircle an enemy, these weapons are particularly effective. The Khalkhin-gol operations were especially instructive concerning the skillful employment of armored units, which acted in closest co-operation with other arms on the operational and technical level.

Success in the operations was dependent upon correct decisions, in turn based upon knowledge of the foe and upon detailed analysis of the characteristics of his defense. Intensive preparations similarly played a major role. Although he possessed an insignificant superiority in manpower along the entire combat front, the commander of the First Army Corps skillfully deployed his forces and thereby achieved decisive preponderance in the sectors of main attack. Shock troops struck at the most vulnerable portions of the Japanese defenses; e.g., the flanks, which were covered by the least reliable elements--Bargut cavalry and Manchurians.

The major Soviet effort was directed against the Japanese left (southern) flank. Both the timing and the location were least expected by the enemy and his defenses were accordingly less solid. On the other hand, the choice of the southern sector was appropriate because the Soviet forces occupied advantageous positions there. Once the initial objectives had been secured to the north, it was then possible to flank the enemy swiftly by a direct strike northeastward and to hit him from the rear by the shortest route.

For the success of the whole operation (especially during the encirclement maneuver) the most significant factor was careful and deliberate preparation. In this connection the command of the First Army Corps deserves especial mention. Preparation of the forces which were to participate in the projected operations was effected under real battlefield conditions, in close correlation with specific missions and objectives. Armor, artillery, and aircraft worked together throughout the preparations, which had one prime goal: to teach the ground troops proper methods of close combat, to acquaint them with the enemy's tactics, and to show them how to work out problems of joint co-operation.

Modern combat is waged by the combined efforts of all arms and services. Success in operations therefore depends to a tremendous extent upon correct organization and uninterrupted mutual co-operation. In the process of preparing for operations at the Khalkhin-gol, problems concerning the joint action of tanks, armored cars, and

aircraft were carefully investigated on the spot during command reconnaissance involving staff officers from all arms. As a consequence, a well-defined chain of command was perfected, from brigade and division level down to the individual companies and batteries. Only after precise agreement concerning on-the-spot conditions were the details of mutual co-operation incorporated into appropriate military orders, etc.

During battle, uninterrupted mutual effort was ensured in the region of the Khalkhin-gol by the establishment of well-linked, close-in command posts of infantry, artillery, and armor. In addition, a well-laid-out signal communication system had been mastered by the field units.

Security was of major importance in ensuring the success of operations. Because of previously organized measures, the Soviet-Mongol Army Command was able to achieve not only strategic but also tactical surprise. The enemy was completely baffled by the clever Soviet use of radio, and by local assaults undertaken in various sectors prior to the commencement of the offensive itself.

The decisive role in the encirclement of the Japanese was played by armor, which executed deep maneuvers to the flanks, penetrated the enemy's rear, and then joined forces. Experience showed that success in such operations depends upon speed and momentum. With the effective co-operation of the Air Force, armor destroyed the enemy's approaching reserves but did not interfere with the progressive tighten-

ing of vises around individual defensive knots of resistance. Armored elements boldly struck into the depth of the enemy's defenses, striving to cut off communications and thereby effect a very swift junction of strength. Tanks and armored vehicles cannot alone constitute a solid encircling ring, however. Infantry units (especially truck-borne) should therefore be moved up immediately behind, to hold frontages on the outside of the circle. During the Khalkhin-gol offensive, infantry machine gun battalions of the tank and armored brigades, elements of the 212th Airborne Brigade, and motorized frontier guards performed this security function.

In repulsing enemy attacks from without the ring, the 80th Infantry Regiment of the 57th Infantry Division played a particularly brilliant role. At the beginning of the offensive, while engaged in exploiting the successes achieved by the first waves, the Regiment moved to the northern slopes of the Great Sands (almost on the state frontier) and took over the defense of the northeastern front, from which it ensured the defense of the ring set up in the southern sector.

Thus, in the battles at the Khalkhin-gol, was born a new concept in the tactics and art of war: The establishment of an outer rim to safeguard the success of liquidation operations against an enemy encircled on the inside. During the course of the Russo-German War, this concept was further developed, based upon the requirement for operational security arising from Soviet encirclement maneuvers.



Another factor which merits separate attention was the 6th Tank Brigade's able use of armor, in close conjunction with infantry, to repulse the attacks of Japanese reserve units.

The Japanese defenses in the Khalkhin-gol region were built around a system of knots of resistance and of support points, utilizing tactically suitable high ground. Combat experience indicated that the most effective method of overcoming this type of defensive setup was to strike into the gaps. Wedging themselves between individual strong points, Soviet forces broke the Japanese support network, dismembered the entire defensive system in separate sectors, then sealed off and eventually wiped out individual pockets of resistance. Battlefield experience showed that frontal assaults on strong points must fail, as was seen at Fui, Sandy, and Green Heights.

Soviet armor and artillery played a very important role in battles for strong points. Operating with infantry elements, individual guns (up to 152-mm. in caliber) were employed to deliver precise fire upon enemy knots of resistance. Under cover of this fire, tanks moved up and overran Japanese infantry in concealed places. Soviet infantrymen then completed the rout of enemy troops, using grenades and fixed bayonets. The Soviet Army later devised even more intensive methods and techniques for destroying greatly reinforced enemy strong points. Newly developed special tank tactics involving the air-drop of armor proved remarkably successful during the Russo-German War.

The military operations at the Khalkhin-gol endowed the Soviet Army with a wealth of valuable combat experience. They demonstrated the outstanding qualities of Soviet military technique undeniably operating under the most adverse conditions, as well as the unsurpassed courage of Soviet troops and commanders. In addition, the operations indicated the high level of Soviet strategic and tactical skill, while furnishing rich new material for further developments. By intensively analyzing combat experience acquired at the Khalkhin-gol and applying it to new conditions, the Soviet Army developed a fundamental method of operation, involving the encirclement of an enemy and his utter extermination. This complicated type of maneuver was subsequently employed with brilliant success under the most varied conditions in the Russo-German War, which resulted in the rout of the Nazis.

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